Bone Weary Medical Residents; The Harm They D

The Washington Monthly

JANUARY/FEBRUARY
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The Wrestler as Governor

Nicholas Lemann on Norman Podhoretz

The Good—and the Really Bad in "ATTITUDE REPORTING"

Featuring: *Jonathan Alter, James Fallows, Joseph Nocera, Gregg Easterbrook, Michael Kinsley, David Ignatius, Timothy Noah, Jonathan Rowe, Matthew Miller, Art Levine, Suzannah Lessard, Walter Shapiro, & Scott Shuger*

30th Anniversary Issue!

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In Florida, Our Union Has the Most Demanding Construction Boss Ever.

"I've been a construction worker for over 40 years, and I've never tackled a job with a more demanding boss than I have today in Hollywood, Florida. The multi-million dollar project is an exciting one: rebuilding the legendary Diplomat Hotel, bringing back world class glamour and accommodations along with an economic revival for south Florida.

Who's the boss who expects so much in the way of quality, who insists the job be done on time and on budget? We are—the Plumbers, Pipefitters and Sprinkler-fitters union. *No contractor ever demanded as much of us as we do of ourselves.*

In 1997 our union purchased the Diplomat's 12.5 acre beachfront property and nearby golf course. Last April, we imploded the old landmark hotel to clear the way for the new Diplomat Resort & Country Club that will open in the year 2000.

Much of south Florida is as excited as we are. The property's redevelopment will create 2,100 permanent jobs and invigorate business and tourism.

Prior to its closing seven years ago, the Diplomat was one of south Florida's most popular hotels. It's demise was a devastating blow to the region's economy. Not only did it cost businesses millions of dollars, but workers lost good jobs and local governments were denied badly-needed tax revenues.

Our union is proud to be the engine that will generate an economic comeback of potentially historic proportions.

Let me tell you a little about the exciting new Diplomat: Imagine a 35-story hotel building with a huge portal in the center visually connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the Intercoastal Waterway. What a spectacular view *that* is going to be! There will be a connecting conference center (with over 200,000 square feet of meeting space), plus retail shops, waterfront dining, marina, tennis center, world-class spa, and a newly designed and expanded 155-acre golf course.

You can bet we'll be using 100 percent skilled union craftspeople to do the job. Building a "hotel for the future" is a prime opportunity for us to demonstrate the superb quality of union workmanship.

If you would like to know more, give me a call. I can't quit talking about it!"

Martin J. Maddaloni
General President

THE PLUMBERS, PIPEFITTERS & SPRINKLERFITTERS UNION
UNITED ASSOCIATION

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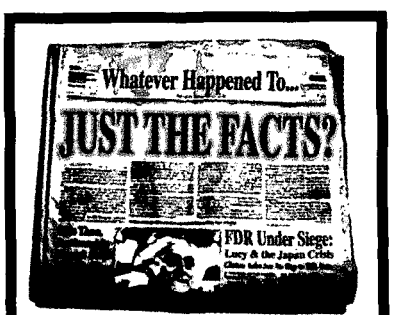

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Letters

Practice, Not Theory

Regarding Richard Whitmire's "Neglected Evidence" (November 1998): Do you realize the untold tragedies—the lives destroyed? My daughter just had her 50th birthday. When she was in the fifth grade, I discovered that she could not read! I promptly got a tutor for her.

What about the untold numbers of people that no one got a tutor for? So many people have gone through life thinking they are stupid due to the stupidity of others.

BARBARA H. POTTER
Little Rock, Arkansas

As a veteran public high school teacher, I really appreciated Richard Whitmire's ("Neglected Evidence," November 1998) discussion on educational research. I have grown weary of workshops led by individuals who have promoted "new" ideas based on faulty or weak research studies. It is a disturbing trend to me because my academic background includes three master's degrees and I am currently working on my second doctorate. The failure to effectively link theory with practice is a major weakness in American education.

Today's reformers have found that it has been quite difficult to make a positive impact on academic achievement in our schools. Educators have encountered a host of problems due to a lack of public and educational consensus on the purposes of learning, utilizing temporary political solutions, brevity of time to implement reform initiatives, and the failure to truly experiment and evaluate the effectiveness of reform measures. In Tyack and Cuban's book *Tinkering Toward Utopia* (1995), the authors wisely observe that reform efforts have a troubling tendency to neglect learning from our past and a failure to think beyond the present. Unfortunately, educators are sometimes guilty of making temporary decisions that alleviate immediate instructional problems but avoid dealing with the real issues.

Hopefully, more teachers and administrators will resist quick "fixes" and promote genuine teaching methods that have a legitimate research basis.

BRENT MUIRHEAD
via e-mail

Kudos

I have just finished reading the article by Michelle Cottle appearing in your October issue and entitled "Love Potion No. 9.1," I firmly believe the author should receive a Pulitzer for it. It has both wit and wisdom, and is particularly timely in view of the attention the media is again giving the Clinton-Lewinsky affair. Keep up the good work!

GEORGE SEIFERT
via e-mail

Fixing the Fix

The articles on social security by Mr. Schnurer and Ms. Rhodes in the November issue ("Reinventing Retirement") made some good points but I believe that they, along with everyone else who has pontificated on this subject, missed some major considerations.

Mr. Schnurer writes, "In about 20 years the outflow [from Social Security] will exceed the inflow, and little more than a decade later, if no changes are made, revenues will fund only 75 percent of the benefits due."

This assumes that everybody over 65 will retire. Everything I have ever read about Social Security makes this same, patently false, assumption. It is not the case today and, according to Adam Smith, when there is an acute labor shortage, which Mr. Schnurer is predicting, the price of labor rises. We will have a garden of Eden for people willing to work and Adam Smith predicts that many people will rise to the bait and will continue working well into their retirement years.

We have faced severe labor shortages before (when we were building the trans-continental railroads, for example) and the salaries labor could command always succeeded in drawing enough workers into the gap to complete the job. It seems strange to me that the free market ideologues who are trying to "fix" social security (like we fixed My Lai) seem to miss this point.

The idea of the trust fund is one that I find a little puzzling. What is the government supposed to do with the money in the trust fund? Certainly, it makes no sense to bury it in Fort Knox or in (what amounts to the same thing) government securities. If the government is to invest that money in the private sector, which firms should it invest in? That is a political question that, I fear, has no answer.

Actually, there are some investments the government could, and should, make; namely those that will relieve the anticipated labor shortage. It should invest in education and health, in keeping kids out of prison and rehabilitating those who end up there, in fostering research in improved industrial methods and basic and applied science. Such investments are the only ones that speak to the problem of the anticipated labor shortage.

The only problem with Social Security is the people who are trying to "fix" it.

GUS RABSON
via e-mail

Eric B. Schnurer's thoughtful article about reforming Social Security and the nation's retirement support systems ("Reinventing Retirement," November 1998) contains a confusing passage that misleadingly diminishes the extent to which Social Security serves as an insurance program. The disability and survivor's insurance features of Social Security actually constitute nearly a fourth of the system's budget, with the remainder directed toward defined-benefit retirement payments.

Contrary to the impression left in the article, the insurance coverage that Social Security provides is extensive and costly. If inidividuals had to buy comparable insurance in the private market (not to mention a retirement benefit that increases with

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inflation—another insurance protection that barely exists in the private sector), they would recognize that the so-called "rate-of-return" on their payroll tax contributions is far more generous than calculations that omit the value of the program's insurance protections.

GREG ANRIG, JR.
VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAMS
THE CENTURY FOUNDATION

Law Matters

You have argued ("Tilting," November 1998) every concievable point about President Clinton except the most important. The law.

Though I voted for him twice, I am convinced that the president should be impeached, and if he is proved to have lied under oath he should be removed from office. I think it is also true that the nation could have been spared the travail and expense, not to mention the loss of valuable legislative time, if Linda Tripp and Lucianne Goldberg had not envisioned a lucrative book.

But this—along with Ken Starr's motivation, who told who what, whether the president should be chastised in the well of the House (like a kid in a candy store) and so on and so forth—all this is commentary. Either we're a nation under the law or we're not.

JEANNE ORMSBY
Cleveland, Ohio

Diplomat's Defense

Alexandra Starr produced an interesting piece on U.S. Foreign Service in your November issue. It provides an anecdotal compliment to two thoughtful studies just released independently by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Henry L. Stimpson Center on the future of U.S. diplomacy.

Ms. Starr's overall logic was something less than linear. She began by blaming Mexico's 1994 peso crisis on an alleged Foreign Service bias toward Carlos Salinas. She subsequently charged the U.S. diplomats isolate themselves from the local population so much that they don't understand local events. Then she concluded that Foreign Service Officers are so immersed in the local culture that they provide slanted advice to Washington, although she feels that this doesn't really matter anyway.

As an active duty Foreign Service Officer, I have a somewhat different view of the work we do. We are not reporters. Our primary job is not to describe events abroad, although this was a vital function of diplomats before the advent of modern mass communications. Our job is to influence events abroad in ways that further America's national interests.

In the Foreign Service, we build coalitions to support our goals, as we did again recently in NATO. We persuade hesitant nations to join our efforts in international organizations, such as the United Nations. We thwart the moves of those who undermine our security, such as North Korea. To achieve our mission, we influence foreign government policies through direct, personal contact with leading officials, and we influence foreign public opinion. That takes more than "...mixing with shop keepers or political activists," although we actually do that, too.

Ms. Starr accurately characterized one problem that plagues the Foreign Service: lack of resources for training. Government downsizing over the past six years shrunk the Foreign Service by almost 9 percent. At the same time, the workload went up, not down, as we opened new embassies in the former Soviet Union and responded to ever-increasing demands for passports and visas. I wish we had the luxury to imitate countries which give their newly hired dipomats three years of government-financed training! We don't.

In the end, Ms. Starr's piece didn't answer its title question, "Why It's Time to Reform the Foreign Service." There are some good reasons for reform, along with some practical recommendations, in the two studies mentioned above.

DANIEL F. GEISLER
PRESIDENT
AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE ASSOCIATION

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Consensual Monitoring • Impecunious Victors • A Teacher Who Taught • Detroit's Nazis • The FBI's Psychic

FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE media's grotesquely overheated pursuit of Monicagate comes from a report on polls by the Media Studies Center. Since 1972, 555 poll questions have been asked about Watergate. In just 10 months this year, 1,153 questions have been asked about Monicagate.

The report also notes that more questions have been asked about Whitewater than about Watergate even though the Whitewater investigation did not yield what even Ken Starr could dare call an impeachable offense.

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ROBERT EISNER, THE NORTHwestern economics professor who died recently, was a hero to *The Washington Monthly*. He was our ally in two notable causes. For two decades he argued as we did—against the prevailing opinion of his fellow economists—that we could have full employment without inflation. That view has finally been accepted by the economic establishment in the last year or so.

The other cause we shared was that college professors should teach. Here alas our views have proved less persuasive. Most academic big shots shun the classroom, feeling virtuous if they teach three hours a term and martyred if it's as much as five. Eisner, on the other hand, was in the words of his obituary in *The New York Times* "a zealous teacher who took special delight in teaching introductory courses to undergraduates."

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WHY, ASKED MICHELLE COTTLE in our June issue, do Harvard and other well-endowed universities keep raising their tuition even though the value of their endowment has skyrocketed in the '90s? You may have noticed in our subsequent letters sections that Cottle's questions attracted attention. Soon afterward the academic fat cats began to take the rubber bands off their bank rolls. Harvard, for example, announced that it will increase by 20 percent the amount of endowment income that it contributes to annual operating costs of the university. But you should control your excitement. That increase will be from 3.7 percent to 4.5 percent according to *The Washington Post*, just what it was until the last fiscal year when it dropped to 3.7.

Most reporters are so petrified of being conned by the White House they have become automatically cynical and dismissive.

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BY THE WAY, DID YOU NOTICE how clever Ken Starr was in burying the exoneration of the Clintons on Whitewater, Travelgate, and Filegate? Instead of announcing each of the exonerations when it became clear the Clintons were innocent, he waited until the day he testified before the House Judiciary Committee to break the news. That's because he knew the next day's headlines would be dominated by his allegations of impeachable offenses in the Lewinsky matter, not the exculpation of the Clintons' other -gates. If he had announced each of the exonerations at the actual time it became clear the Clintons were innocent, each finding would have rated a front page story in even the most Clinton-hating paper. Instead, notes *Washington Post* media critic Howard Kurtz, "The exoneration was reduced to just another subplot."

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WHAT ROLE SHOULD HIGHER education and the media play in encouraging civic responsibility? That was the question posed at a conference I attended not long ago. Conferences can be deadly. But this one made me think.

For starters, universities must free themselves from domination by departmental and research concerns to focus on teaching. The major issues of the new century should be the subject of interdisciplinary courses that examine problems like global warming and the cruel havoc markets can wreak on the world economy.

Twentieth century history should be emphasized as essential background for dealing with the issues of the 21st. It should be a required course and should be taught by a teacher or teams of teachers who can make comprehensible the political, economic, and scientific elements of today's problems. Case studies should be used to compare, say, the way Kennedy failed at the Bay of Pigs and succeeded in the Cuban Missile Crisis or the heights to which the House Judiciary Committee rose

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during the Nixon impeachment hearings and the depths to which it sank during the Clinton hearings.

A better grounding in 20th-century history could have saved all those wise guy economists from the folly of thinking that full employment and low inflation cannot coexist. If they had studied the 40s, 50s, and 60s, they would have known that there were substantial periods in each decade when we had both low inflation and high employment—and that Robert Eisner and *The Washington Monthly* were right!

As for the media, it should concentrate much more on explanatory journalism that explains the facts and ideas readers need to understand to confront important problems such as the reform of Social Security, public education, and campaign finance. If the reporters are motivated by a search for solutions, that's even better—as long as they disclose their biases. But to add my voice to the debate that begins on page 22 of this issue, I do favor striving for complete objectivity in the news stories that usually lead front pages and nightly television. Of course, none of us can be totally objective, but with these stories we have a duty to try our damnedest. Too many reporters have gotten in the habit of loading the news in order to make themselves look smart. And too many editors reward these journalists with star status.

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THE CRIME RATE CONTINUES TO head down. Last year, according to the Associated Press, it was down 3 percent from 1996, 10 percent from 1993 and 13 percent from 1988. One caveat is suggested by *The Washington Post*'s Debbie Goldberg, who reports that Philadelphia's new police chief has discovered that crime there had been underreported because captains were judged on the basis of the rate in their districts. When figures for 1997 were corrected it turned out that the crime rate had actually risen 2 percent instead of dropping as originally reported. But even in Philadelphia the murder rate was declining. Nationally, according to the AP, it's down 8.1 percent from 1996.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT ALBERT Speer once said that Hitler "would never have considered invading Poland" without synthetic fuel technology provided by General Motors, that in 1938 a GM executive was given a medal for "distinguished service to the Reich," and that in 1939 GM Chairman Alfred P. Sloan described the company's German operations as "highly profitable"? I'm indebted to *The Washington Post* for these facts as well as this ultimate irony: After the war, GM collected $32 million from the U.S. government for the damage American bombers had inflicted on its plants in Germany. Ford, by the way, was equally guilty. It's good to remind oneself of the dark side of capitalism in an era when people tend toward uncritical enthusiasm for "the market economy."

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BACK HOME IN WEST VIRGINIA, there was bad news at Christmastime. Weirton Steel laid off 415 employees, adding to the 342 it had dropped in November. The reason is that the United States is being flooded with underpriced imports. More than 10,000 steelworkers have lost their jobs around the country, according to Vicki Smith of the Associated Press. Weirton Steel says that Russia, Japan, and Brazil are violating U.S. trade law with their exports. The Clinton administration hesitates to crack down on the violators because it is concerned about encouraging economic recovery in these countries. But couldn't we do more to insist at least to Japan, which is the main trade offender, that its economic policy encourage a recovery based on increased consumer demand rather than an increase in exports? That would help Japan without hurting us.

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I'M STILL PONDERING THE tobacco agreement but I can already warn you of one dubious provision. Even though the agreement is supposed to be between the states and the companies, it actually has the effect of limiting anti-tobacco options for the federal government. If the feds decide to increase tobacco taxes to dissuade smoking, whatever portion of the revenue from the tax that goes to the states will reduce by the same amount the payments that the agreement requires the companies to pay the states.

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OF ALL THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO our symposium on journalism, the only one I strongly disagree with is by Walter Shapiro, who happens to be one of the TWM alumni I'm fondest of.

Walter starts by attacking the example of Clinton's August radio address that Jonathan Alter and I use to illustrate how Monicagate has consigned important news to the back pages. The address announced new federal protections against HMO abuses. This was not a policy proposal but an action the President was taking that affected 120 million people. Walter excuses the *Times*' failure to give the story more attention by arguing that the White House had failed, by not having administration heavies like Alexis Herman present, to alert the press that the story was important. Can't reporters think for themselves? Why can't they see without prompting from White House flacks that 120 million people might be quite interested in getting new protections from the HMOs—a subject they had repeatedly told pollsters they were worried about?

Shapiro dismisses the President's Saturday radio addresses by saying they're "normally used to announce Dick Morris style small-deeds-fluff." This description

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scarcely fits the HMO speech or the one the president gave in July about what he was doing to control the food-borne illnesses that afflict millions. Or the November speech about the devasting effect the world's economic problems were having on American farmers, or his September speech on the world economy, which was making a lot of us nervous that week, including even the normally optimistic Wall Street bulls. That speech was reported on page 9 of *The Washington Post*, echoing *The New York Times*'s downplaying of the HMO story.

But my main disagreement with Shapiro is that he seems to think that what he sees as White House cynicism justifies media cynicism. This reflects a serious misunderstanding of how a democratic leader must govern. He has to calculate the possible effects of his actions on the opinion of those who elect him and on the legislators they also elect. This calculation often invites suspicion that the leader is being cynical. But even if he is, the action he proposes may still be sound. It should be examined on its merits. Do we really care about the motive if the action is good?

Most reporters are so petrified of being conned by the White House that they have become automatically cynical and dismissive. Franklin Roosevelt may have been cynical in his explanation of Lend-Lease—that when your neighbor's house is on fire you lend him your garden hose, which he will return after the fire has been put out. FDR knew the hose would not be returned. The tanks and planes were going to be used and probably destroyed by war's end. But Lend-Lease was still an inspired policy and worthy of being reported as a great contribution to the survival of Britain and our ultimate victory in World War II. Roosevelt, superb politician that he was, had to know that every action he took against Hitler won him Jewish votes and Jewish campaign contributions. But can anyone argue that he was wrong to take the actions?

Did you notice how clever Ken Starr was in burying the exoneration of the Clintons on Whitewater, Travelgate, and Filegate?

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THE MILITARY continues to be embarassingly top-heavy with brass, according to *Time*'s Mark Thompson. During World War II, the Navy had one admiral for every 130 ships. It now has one for every 1.6 ships. The Air Force had one general for every 244 planes; it now has one for every 23.

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THE CIA IS BUSY RECRUITING new agents. We hope they'll be more careful than they were during the last big recruiting drive, which took place during Bill Casey's reign in the 1980s. Too many cowboys, misfits, and outright weirdos were added to the agency's rolls. They proved willing co-conspirators in the mad plots hatched by the Ollie Norths of the era.

The good news this time is that campuses are no longer closed to the CIA. Smart people don't automatically rule out an agency career, as they did in the wake of the Vietnam war. This was an example of liberal foolishness. How could they expect the CIA to get better if good people refused to join!

The same point can be made about the rest of the government. If we want it to do a good job, then we must be willing to work for it. The FBI, the IRS, the FAA—all the agencies we get mad at when they screw up won't screw up, or will screw up less, if more good people work for them.

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ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF PENTAGON lunacy is the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, which includes among its distinguished alumni Manuel Noriega and Roberto D'Abuisson, the alleged mastermind of El Salvador's death squads. Opponents of the school, according to *The Hill*'s Betsy Rothstein, include one of my favorite congressmen, John Lewis, while supporters include my least favorite, Clinton-hating Bob Barr—have you ever noticed how eerily similar his smile is to the late Heinrich Himmler's? Come to think of it, the resemblance may be more than physical. Last June, Barr was an honored speaker at a meeting of the Council of Conservative Citizens, which holds that interracial marriage amounts to white genocide.

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SPEAKING OF BUREAUCRATIC MISadventures, did you know the FBI had engaged a psychic to assist in the investigation of the crash of TWA Flight 800? According to *The Washington Post*'s Michael Grunwald, "She surveyed the debris, then announced her conclusion: a bomb hidden in a suitcase near the left wing had destroyed the plane." Her conclusion, as you probably already know, was not confirmed by the investigation.

Grunwald's article suggests that the FBI made other errors in the TWA investigation that were more serious than hiring a psychic. They stuck with the terrorist theory far too long, downplaying evidence that the cause of the crash was the ignition of fumes in the center wing fuel tank, and leaking stories about "explosive residue" and "blast damage in the forward landing gear" that gave the media the excuse it needed to keep exploiting the far more sensational terrorist angle.

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LATELY I'VE BEEN QUITE CRITICAL of *The Washington Post* editorial writers for their get-Clintonism, so

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it's nice to say a kind word about them for a change. A recent editorial recommended firing bad teachers from the District of Columbia schools, taking on an issue that liberals have been slow to embrace. The *Post* didn't pull any punches: "The difference between District schools in the future and those in the past is that soon poor teachers finally will have to go."

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IF YOU WERE WORRIED ABOUT the Hindu nationalists and their proclivity for nukes, you may find comfort in the recent state election results in India where the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party suffered what Celia Dugger of *The New York Times* calls a "humiliating defeat." The voters, however, had not exactly joined Greenpeace. It seems that they were disturbed less by the nationalists' nuclear tests that alarmed the rest of the world than they were by rising vegetable prices.

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BUCKLEY V. VALEO, THE INFAMOUS Supreme Court decision that equates campaign spending with free speech, lives on. In November the court passed up a chance to repudiate it by declining to hear appeals in two cases involving limits on campaign spending. Many observers now believe the only way to get rid of *Buckley* is by constitutional amendment. The problem of course is that this route would probably consume a decade at least. What I suggest first is for reformers to press Congress to pass a bill that would tell the Court that it is the judgment of the American people, voiced through their elected representatives, that money is not speech, that campaign spending can be limited both in the interest of fair play and to curb the power of special interests. I doubt if the court would then feel strongly enough about *Buckley* to go against the expressed will of the people. Of course, it would be far from easy to get such a bill through Congress. But one thing is certain: Free speech is hurt rather than helped by *Buckley*. As long as one well-heeled candidate can drown out the message of his opponent, the opponent's freedom of speech is illusory.

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THE GOOD NEWS FROM THE November elections is that money doesn't always win. Several candidates won even though considerably less was spent in their campaigns than in their opponents'. The impecunious victors include Charles Schumer in New York, where he was outspent by Al D'Amato by $9.3 million; Russell Feingold, who the experts were predicting would lose the Wisconsin senate race because of his Mr. Clean campaign financing; and Rush Holt, a New Jersey congressional candidate who not only won the general election against a better-heeled opponent but did the same thing in the primary. Unfortunately, the good news just involves three candidates out of hundreds. We still need to repeal *Buckley*.

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BILL CLINTON'S PATIENTS' BILL of Rights has opened up the pocketbooks of the lobbyists. In just the first half of last year, according to Jonathan Salant of the Associated Press, lobbying groups with a stake in the issue contributed $74 million to congressional candidates. The bad news for the average man is that $60 million of that amount comes from groups opposed to the bill of rights.

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ONE OF THE MORE FASCINATING inconsistencies of American liberalism is that abortion is advocated while the death penalty is opposed. Conservatives have a similar problem. They love the death penalty and hate abortion. I know only a handful of writers who face this inconsistency—Colman McCarthy, our own alumnus Jason DeParle, and most recently Richard North Patterson, one of my favorite thriller writers, who in his new book, *No Safe Place*, reveals himself to be a neoliberal in almost every way except for his opposition to high taxes for the rich. (I'm not collecting his royalties or I too might be tempted to stray on this issue.)

Anyway, what reminded me of all this was a recent conference at Northwestern University that featured death penalty survivors, people whose conviction had been reversed at the last minute. I was thinking how wonderfully this demonstrated the central flaw in the death penalty: You don't want to risk frying one innocent person. But then the sponsor of the conference, a law professor named Lawrence Marshall, said: "I defy anyone to look at these flowers that they wanted to extinguish and tell us that their death penalty works." As a former lawyer who has gotten off a number of the clearly guilty in his day, I thought: Bullshit! It's more than likely that only a few of the convicted murderers were innocent flowers. The rest were beneficiaries of lawyers clever enough to exploit the many inefficiencies of the criminal justice system.

But the mere possibility of the wrong man being executed is enough to make me oppose the death penalty except for serial killers like Ted Bundy. As for abortion, I remain convinced that it should be a legal right but that no one should forget it is still a moral choice.

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IN CASE YOU MISSED THE COLloquy between David Kendall and Ken Starr, it captures Starr at his most Uriah Heep-ish:

Kendall: One of the purposes [Monica Lewinsky was detained by Starr's investigators at the Ritz Carlton] was to get Ms. Lewinsky to wear a recording device and surreptitiously record Mr. [Vernon] Jordan or the president, was it not?

Starr: It was not ... we explained to her ... one of the things a cooperating witness can do is to assist us in consensual monitoring. ●

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Jesse's Victory

It was no fluke

By Steven E. Schier

In the wake of his stunning election as Minnesota's next governor, former World Wrestling Federation superstar Jesse Ventura presides as a genuine cultural phenomenon. The darling of the media, particularly televised "infotainment" programs, he allowed over one hundred desperate reporters to interview him during his stopover at the National Governors' Conference shortly after his victory. He has signed a book contract in the mid six figures with a major publishing house, and is in negotiation with NBC for a possible TV bio-pic. Stores in Minnesota feature T-shirts proclaiming "My Governor Can Kick Your Governor's Ass" and, more tamely, "My Governor Can Beat Up Your Governor." Jesse—that's what infatuated Minnesotans call their new governor—loves the media, thinks fast on his feet, and presents himself with a testosterone-juiced air of authority. Americans will see a lot of him over the next four years.

If all this seems a funny political sideshow, it isn't. Ventura's election carries important implications for politics in Minnesota and the nation as a whole. His triumph seems so beyond the pale that a lot must be happening in our politics to cause it. And a lot is. Jesse's ascendancy underscores the great and growing weaknesses of our two major parties with the public. It reveals that third parties have a future in American politics only if national campaign finance and voter registration rules come to resemble those now in force in Minnesota. The success of Ventura's unorthodox, low-budget campaign ads exposes the shortcomings of conventional political advertising. And, perhaps most disturbingly, Jesse's rise to the top confirms the growing power of celebrity and entertainment in American politics.

Steven E. Schier *is chair of the political science department at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota and serves as political analyst for* WCCO *television in Minneapolis, where he assessed the Ventura victory as it happened on election night.*

How He Did It

Jesse's victory required a harmonic convergence of legal and political circumstances that took Minnesota's quirky political populism to a new level. During the '90s, voters in Minnesota have taken a liking to candidates who attack the "political establishment" of the state from all manner of directions. In 1990 and 1996, Paul Wellstone's tie-dyed leftist insurgency carried him to victory over establishment Republican Rudy Boschwitz. Rod Grams, as emphatically to the right as Wellstone is to the left, won a Senate seat during the 1994 nationwide Republican insurgency, defeating Ann Wynia, a conventional liberal well-known and widely respected among Minnesota's political establishment. Arne Carlson, the outgoing Republican governor, is a scrapper who has been at war with the activists in his own party for years, and has won office twice despite being denied endorsement for the party primary by two consecutive state Republican conventions. Jesse is the culmination of this trend, rocking the political establishment from the "radical" center.

Why do Minnesotans like the insurgent style in their statewide candidates? The answer lies in the decay of the two major parties in the state. Two decades ago, scholars routinely ranked Minnesota as a state with a strong party system. No more. Though both the Democratic and Republican parties of the state still boast big budgets and many officeholders, they have lost their hold over the voters.

Each election year, Minnesota's parties hold a statewide set of precinct caucuses followed by county and congressional district conventions. At the June state convention, the parties write a platform and endorse a favored candidate for the September primary. Over the last 20 years, attendance at the precinct caucuses has dwindled to the point where the total number of those

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showing up for both parties' caucuses wouldn't even fill the 50,000 seats of the Metrodome (home of the Twins and Vikings). Party activists have become extreme, standing well to the left and right of most voters. In addition, established interest groups—the AFL-CIO and Education Minnesota (the modestly titled state teachers' union) among the Democrats, and anti-tax and Christian conservatives among the Republicans—set the platform agenda and often hand-pick the endorsed candidates.

The result is that each party's endorsing convention has become an outpost of exotic politics. Evangelical religion is heavy in the air when Republicans meet, and this year Democrats passed a rule declaring their convention must be "fragrance free" lest any delegate's perfume offend another's allergies. The result of this trend? The public says no, thank you, to endorsed candidates. The last party-endorsed gubernatorial candidate to actually win election was Rudy Perpich when he ran for reelection in 1986. Since then, voters in the primaries have rejected the endorsed candidates (Alan Quist, in 1994 the endorsed Republican candidate for governor, lost 2 to 1 to Governor Carlson in the primary) or they have gotten waxed in November (John Marty, the endorsed Democrat for governor in 1994, won a primary squeaker and then in November also lost 2 to 1 to Carlson).

With the parties now in disrepute, Minnesota's elections have become more candidate-centered, particularly at the statewide level, where television rules. Those endorsed candidates who have won statewide all had an insurgent quality that blurred any association they had with the activists and interest groups of their political party. Each winner got around the unpopularity of their party via personal style. And in this lay Jesse Ventura's great opportunity—style.

Ventura, a Minneapolis native, was well known from his wrestling days. In recent years, he had reigned as a local talk radio host, where he spouted a vague constellation of views. Though he knew little about the actual operations of government, he claimed to be socially libertarian regarding abortion and gay rights, yet a strong fiscal conservative. As Mayor of the Minneapolis suburb of Brooklyn Park in the early '90s, he feuded frequently with the city council. His record in office was mixed; crime went down but taxes went up.

When Ventura announced his candidacy, his slogan was "Retaliate in '98," a sort of "up yours" to the Minnesota political establishment. The state legislature's handling of the huge $2 billion budget surplus in 1998 was the catalyst for Ventura's candidacy. The legislature returned less than half of it in tax relief, saving some as a fiscal reserve and using the rest for a variety of spending programs. Ventura promised to return the entire surplus if he were elected.

Through September, most observers viewed Ventura as an amusing sideshow. The victors in the party primaries, Democratic Attorney General Hubert "Skip" Humphrey (son of the famous Hubert) and Republican St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman, are both life-long government employees and officeholders. Each was personally cautious and "button-down" in demeanor. They provided a nice gray background for Jesse's campaign antics. Every act needs a straight man, and Jesse had two of them. The great mistake during the fall came from the Humphrey campaign. Hopeful that Ventura would draw "angry white male" voters away from Coleman, they insisted that Ventura be included in each of 10 debates. Jesse had his stage. In the debates, he stated his views in a blustery, candid, and disarming fashion. For instance, when asked whether he favored state aid for college students, Jesse disapproved and called on students to "get a job!" It became clear that he knew little about policy, but he did speak sincerely and displayed a commanding, charismatic presence. Coleman and Humphrey largely ignored Jesse and sniped at each other during the debates, allowing Jesse to seem appealingly anti-political.

PHOTO: RICHARD MARSHALL/ ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS

The clueless cooperation of Humphrey and Cole-

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man, however, was not enough to propel Jesse to victory. Several other forces helped push him over the top. Polling in October fired Ventura's momentum. His support rose through the teens in October to 27 percent (with Humphrey at 35 percent and Coleman at 30 percent) in the last published *Minneapolis Star Tribune* poll, taken the week before the election. Such late polls made it clear that Jesse could win, encouraging his supporters and prompting many voters to view him as a serious alternative.

All this still would not have been enough, had it not been for two election laws. First, Minnesota's campaign finance law entitled Jesse to $330,000 in public funds. Minnesota law treats third-party candidates for statewide office in a fashion similar to the way national law treats third-party candidates in presidential elections. In 1994 and 1996, Dean Barkley, the Reform Party candidate for the U.S. Senate, received a whisker over 5 percent of the overall vote. This qualified the Reform Party as a "major party" eligible for public campaign funding. Upon reaching the 5 percent threshold, major party candidates receive a share of public funds to conduct their campaigns. The Democratic and Republican nominees received over a million dollars but are limited to $2.1 million in total campaign spending. Thanks to Barkley's 1994 and 1996 finishes, Ventura, the Reform Party candidate for governor, was eligible after the election for a fraction of the amount allocated to Humphrey and Coleman. The precise amount depended on the size of his support at the polls, which had to equal at least 5 percent in order for him to receive any funds at all. Assuming a 5 percent finish, Jesse was able to arrange bank loans for $330,000, to be reimbursed by taxpayers.

This law helped Jesse win in several ways. First, he had raised few private funds, and so became heavily dependent on the public subsidy. (This despite the fact that he ran a campaign strongly opposed to public spending!) Second, he was able to hire populist image-meister Bill Hillsman, a Twin Cities advertising executive who was the inspiration behind the successful and unorthodox ads that propelled underdog Wellstone into the Senate in 1990. Hillsman's ads, particularly one featuring the Jesse Ventura "action figure" fighting a corrupt lobbyist "action figure," proved effective and memorable. Without the ads, Ventura could not have eked out his 55,000 vote plurality. Campaign finance laws do have consequences. No public money, no ads, no victory. Third, the law kept Coleman, his major rival, from spending all of the money he could have raised. Additional spending by Coleman might have erased Ventura's narrow margin of victory.

Ventura was also helped by the fact that Minnesota is one of only seven states that allow voters to register on election day. A surge of young, first-time voters took advantage of last-minute registration to cast their ballots for Jesse. Minnesota's turnout led the nation as 60.1 percent of those eligible went to the polls. Statewide, a remarkable one in six voters registered on election day, the highest proportion of the electorate to do so since the mid-'70s when the law was first implemented. Anoka County, a populous suburban area north of Minneapolis, provides a striking example of the Ventura effect. There, Jesse received 51 percent of the vote (compared to 37 percent statewide). Turnout in the county was an astounding 72 percent, with 22,375 people registering on election day. Similar results occurred in other areas of Ventura support across the state. Exit polls revealed that 12 percent of those voting would not have done so if Ventura had not been on the ballot. By this measure, Jesse's candidacy pulled 250,000 people to the polls. Without Election Day registration, Minnesotans would be adjusting to Governor Norm Coleman, who narrowly lost to Jesse and led Humphrey by six percentage points.

What It Means

Some reasons for Jesse's triumph are specific to Minnesota, but many are not. Our national parties share many of the weaknesses of their Minnesota counterparts. Though the Minnesota parties spent well over a million dollars in get-out-the-vote efforts on Election Day, the personal appeal of the poorly funded but engaging Ventura swamped their efforts. Exit polls showed that 33 percent of Democrats and 29 percent of Republicans voted for Ventura. The national parties, swollen with soft money and complacent with thousands of officeholders, also do a poor job of getting out the vote. A miserable 36 percent of eligible voters showed up nationwide on Election Day, 1998. Conventional partisan politics is hardly more popular nationally than in Minnesota.

The Ventura candidacy is a warning bell to the national parties about their extremism and dependence on powerful interest groups. For evidence on both counts, one need look no further than the U.S. House of Representatives. There, the caucuses of both parties are dominated by ideologues of the left and right, each well-supported by the contributions of their favorite organized interests. Ventura's victory suggests that time may be running out on such conventional politics. The Minnesota public shares a common disgust of it with the national public, and happened to find an outlet for

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this discontent in Ventura.

The success of Hillsman's ads for Ventura illustrates another weakness in national electoral politics. Political consultants, including those who worked for Coleman and Humphrey, rely on shopworn advertising styles during campaigns, often featuring heavily negative messages. Indeed, ads in one state often seem virtually indistinguishable from ads shown in every other. Why is this? According to Hillsman, it all goes back to the desire of consultants to make a buck. Since ad consultants are paid in a percentage of the overall ad "buy," the incentive is for quick work and heavy quantity in campaign advertising. Big buys mean big bucks for consultants. Since certain ads have worked in the past, qualitative experimentation of the sort done by Hillsman is risky. Further, quality ads can prove effective at a small fraction of the cost of conventional ads, as did Hillsman's, and what consultant wants to slice his/her income drastically? Hillsman argues that spending limits might actually improve campaign ads by shifting the focus from quantity to quality.

A third lesson for national politics from Minnesota is that third parties have no chance in national elections without campaign finance reform. True, Perot did break through at the presidential level, but only by spending tens of millions of his own dollars first. That's a high cost of entry. If the threshold is high at the presidential level, it is virtually insurmountable in congressional elections, where no public financing exists. Unless third parties can earn public matching funds, they will be spent to death by the two major parties, regardless of how attractive any third party candidate proves to be. The current campaign finance laws allow the activist zealots and powerful interests dominating our two major parties to maintain their grip on the electorate. To loosen that grip, the laws must change.

A final, and disturbing lesson from Minnesota concerns the triumph of style over substance. True, Jesse Ventura placed himself somewhere between Humphrey's liberalism and Coleman's conservatism, but it was never very clear just where he stood. Some of his ideas voiced during the campaign—such as prohibiting welfare recipients from having cable television and requiring the cable companies to enforce this law—are just plain wacky. Now that Ventura's

The Washington Monthly

Journalism Award

NOVEMBER 1998

DONALD L. BARLETT & JAMES B. STEELE
"What Corporate Welfare Costs You" (Series)
Time Magazine

Barlett and Steele demonstrate how government handouts to corporations benefit the fat cats at the top of the ladder, not the average worker. The writers detail how companies can wreak havoc with the environment and damage local economies.

STEPHEN LABATON
"The Debacle That Buried Washington"
The New York Times

Thought the Savings and Loan crisis was history? Think again. Two years ago the Supreme Court ruled government had betrayed S&L investors by changing the rules of the bailout at the height of the crisis. As a result, Labaton explains, taxpayers could pick up a tab climbing into the billions of dollars.

RENATA ADLER
"Decoding the Starr Report"
Vanity Fair

The last thing you probably want to read is another rehash of the Starr-Lewinsky chaos. But Adler brings a tough and fresh perspective to the investigation, demonstrating the frightening lengths Ken Starr and his army of prosecutors were willing to go to bring down Bill Clinton's presidency.

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elected, he has stopped calling for a refund of last year's surplus to taxpayers. Minnesotans are waiting for their governor-elect to figure out his positions on major issues. A tax cut? Spending increases? Spending cuts? Education reforms? Who knows? Jesse is very much a work in progress.

If elections worked the way they are supposed to, Minnesotans would have known the answers to these questions before the election. Certainly, Humphrey and Coleman showered them with policy detail. That didn't matter to many voters, including the 46 percent of those under the age of 30 who gave Ventura their

Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

Richard Mellon Scaife may well have been the leading backer of the get-Clinton movement, having sunk roughly $2 million into the *American Spectator*'s Arkansas Project which produced "Troopergate", and its star, "Paula." Recently he told *George*'s **John F. Kennedy, Jr.** an anecdote that suggested Clinton had arranged for the crash of **Ron Brown**'s plane: "Listen, he can order people done away with at his will. He's got the entire federal government behind him."

Remember our December item about how generously **Ken Starr** paid **Ronald Rotunda** for his service to the Independent Counsel after Rotunda had filed a Supreme Court brief on behalf of **Paula Jones**? Rotunda, an Illinois law professor, was supposed to be advising Starr on "ethics and constitutional issues." But according to **Joe Conason** of the *New York Observer*, he billed for several trips to Little Rock and Washington, D.C., to consult with deputy prosecutor **Hickman Ewing** and **Jackie Bennett** on what is described only as a "special project." When Conason asked Rotunda just what was his mysterious "special project," Rotunda refused to answer, citing grand jury secrecy. You have to love the way the Starr gang invokes grand jury secrecy whenever it protects possible misdeeds of their own, but constantly leaked grand jury testimony to reporters like ABC's **Jackie Judd** and *The Washington Post*'s **Susan Schmidt** when the leaks could hurt **Bill Clinton**.

In his new book *Dragonfly: NASA and the Crisis Aboard Mir*, **Bryan Burrough** compares Johnson Space Center Director **George Abbey** to **Rasputin** and **J. Edgar Hoover**, alleging that astronauts are so afraid of incurring his displeasure and losing their chance to fly that they hesitate to mention possible safety problems. But if Burrough has a villain or two he also has his heroes. One, astronaut **Michael Foale**, is depicted as a hero for, among other things, showing the Russian crew—whose morale was crashing because of the many Mir mishaps—the movie "Apollo 13" with its story of frightening problems overcome.

The jurors who acquitted **Susan McDougal** in the **Zubin Mehta** case "expressed outrage that the case came to court," reports the Associated Press, "calling it a waste of taxpayer money." As for the 18 months she has spent in jail courtesy of **Ken Starr** and his new charges against her for obstructing justice, McDougal says, "He says he's cleared the president of Whitewater charges. So what was I obstructing?"

When Rep. **Dan Burton** goes to the House barbershop he takes along, according to *The Hill*, "his private duffel bag of tools—scissors, comb, and electric razor." The congressman is said to be concerned about AIDS.

As you may have noticed, this magazine has been pretty consistent in its opposition to the impeachment of **Bill Clinton**. But there is one point the Republicans make that does gnaw at us. Sometimes military personnel are punished for offenses similar to the president's. Now there's an example involving the Foreign Service. **Jerry Seper** of *The Washington Times* has come up with the case of an ambassador who was fired because of allegations that he had made sexual overtures to two of his female subordinates. "The firing," writes Seper, "followed complaints that he repeatedly groped, kissed, fondled, touched, and called them at their homes despite numerous requests that he leave them alone." One of our office's more resolute defenders of the president points out that there is no evidence that the president ever persisted after one request

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vote. Jesse provided a little information about the issues—and a lot of entertainment. It was fun. It just wasn't substantive.

The generational aspect of Ventura's victory is ultimately the most disturbing. Younger voters like Jesse's act, and hate the language of conventional politics. A lot of standard political discourse is pretty tacky, but at its core, it is more substantive than anything Jesse has yet uttered. As infotainment becomes the rage on local news, Americans may come to demand more infotainment candidates like Jesse. He's fun, he's a celebrity and he's unconventional. Can he govern? Who knows?

that he desist. But the similarity still bothers the rest of us.

Veteran Washington observers will tell you the White House National Security Adviser and the Secretary of State are natural bureaucratic enemies, and illustrate with stories of classic struggles between **Henry Kissinger** and **William Rogers** in the first Nixon administration and between **Cy Vance** and **Zbigniew Brzezinski** during **Jimmy Carter**'s tenure. Now **Madeline Albright** is said to be upset that **Sandy Berger** is getting the last word with **Bill Clinton**, too often putting a dovish twist to what *The Washington Post*'s **Jim Hoagland** calls her "muscular policies." The latest example is the last-minute cancellation of the bombing of Iraq that was scheduled for Nov. 14. Albright is suspected, according to the *National Journal*, of leaking the news that Clinton "rejected the recommendation of his vice president and all but one of his national security advisers."

What member was behind that last-minute attempt to expand the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment inquiry into the area of alleged **Clinton** campaign finance abuses? None other than **Henry Hyde**. Egged on by his personally-selected chief counsel, **David Schippers**, Hyde, in the words of *The Washington Post*, "proceeded on his own," without consulting other members, to seek evidence of naughty Clinton fund-raising practices. When it turned out to be a dry hole, the chairman didn't even blush. We've got a score to settle with the sources who told us this guy was fair-minded. He has been consistently partisan.

Another prejudice we have to confess is one in favor of **Hillary Clinton**. We think she's almost totally nifty. In fact our only complaint, other than that her health care plan was too complicated, is her proclivity for stonewalling without which there probably would never have been a revival of the Independent Counsel law and the emergence of **Ken Starr** as the Clintons' tormentor. Our best guess is that she feared that she would be exposed as having either underestimated the hours she worked for Madison Guaranty or overestimated the billable hours. The latter is more probable (as any lawyer can tell you) and was probably done by her firm (again, as any lawyer can tell you). So she was trying to hide a very small sin. Why? Friends say she feels any concession will be greedily seized by the Republicans as an admission of serious guilt.

We did not sympathize with **Hillary**'s fear until the morning of December 10 when we picked up the conservative *Washington Times* and saw how it chose to treat the concession made by a White House attorney that "reasonable people" could have concluded that **Clinton** gave false testimony. That's what we though the Republicans had said he had to do in order to be forgiven. But how did the *Times* play it? "In what was supposed to be a strong finish to the president's defense, the White House instead found itself ceding significant ground to Republicans who had long been stymied in their attempts to wrest concessions from Mr. Clinton's defenders." The headline over the story read: "Clinton's defense team stumbles en route to panel's vote with concessions on veracity."

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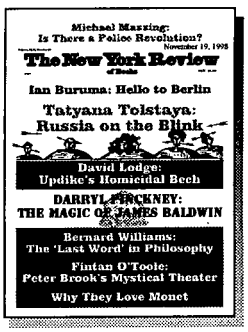

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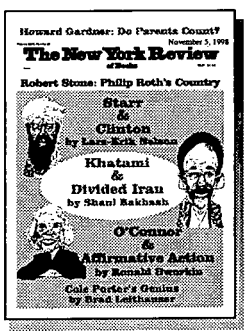

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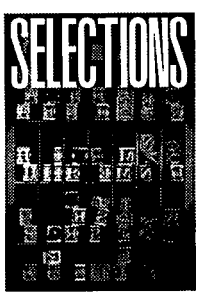

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Exhaustion that Kills

Why residents are still overworked—and what we can do about it

BY ROBERT WORTH

BY THE TIME THEY WHEELED ME into the operating room I was so doped up on morphine I could barely see. But I did notice the young resident I had met earlier, a small guy with thick glasses and curly brown hair who looked as if he was stoned out of his mind. And I couldn't help overhearing it when he began to botch my spinal tap. "No, no—too slow!" said the attending surgeon, as the resident sucked out my spinal fluid with a syringe, then stuck another needle between the vertebrae at the base of my spine and shot me full of Novocain. "No—Start again!"

It seemed like a harmless mistake at first. Lying on my stomach, I waited for the numbness to creep up from my toes to my hips, as the doctor had said it would. I had liked the idea of a spinal tap, since it would allow me to remain awake and listen to the doctors operate on my knee. Sure enough, the numbness crept upward. I thought drowsily of Socrates drinking his poison and dying from the feet upwards.

Only it didn't stop at my hips. Thanks to the resident's fumble, it kept going. Soon it engulfed my waist, my belly, then my chest. I told the doctor, who sounded concerned, and assured me it wouldn't go any farther. But it did. My shoulders disappeared, then my arms, my hands. Now the tingling was in my neck, lapping at my head like a torrent of dark water. Suddenly I felt a powerful wave of nausea. And then I panicked. Even in my drugged state I knew that if I were to vomit I would surely choke on it, since I could not move my body any more than I could feel it.

I told the doctor, and this time I could hear the anxiety in his voice when he answered. He barked commands at the residents and shot something into my IV. The white coats scurrying around me faded to a blur, and before I knew it I was in the post-op recovery room, where I shuddered like an epileptic for what seemed like days as the overdose of anesthesia slowly drained out of my body.

It's possible that my little medical misadventure had nothing to do with the fact that the guilty party looked like he'd just emerged from a three-day bender. But with residents at major hospitals logging well over 100 hours a week, it's not likely. As it turned out, I left the hospital more or less unscathed (unless the back pain I've suffered ever since had something to do with the operation). Others are not so lucky. "Thousands of people are killed every day by young doctors who are exhausted and unsupervised," says Dr. Bertrand Bell, who chaired New York state's 1989 effort to change the current residents' training system. A growing body of research has provided evidence to back up Bell's claim. Most of these incidents aren't the eye-catching disasters that attract lawsuits and talk-show hosts, such as the case of the resident who fell asleep while sewing up a woman's uterus and then toppled over onto the patient. They're quieter and more insidious. At teaching hospitals all over the country, red-eyed residents and interns (another term for first-year residents) are stumbling through life-or-death decisions while the doctors who should be supervising them slumber at home. Talk to any young doctor and you'll hear more than you ever wanted to know—off the record, of course. One first-year surgical resident, less than three months in, told me she had already witnessed an older resident nodding off repeatedly as he sewed up a patient's abdomen during a late-night operation.

Only one state in 50 has made any serious effort to crack down on this situation. Since 1989, it has been illegal for hospitals in New York to work residents more than 80 hours a week, to give them shifts more than 24 hours long, or to leave them without adequate supervision. In most professions these rules would be viewed as a sick joke—how many of us can work almost 12 hours a day, seven days a week? Yet senior doctors and hospitals around the country view

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them as an outrageous restraint, and in New York they flout them openly. When the state's Department of Health raided 12 hospitals last spring to check up on compliance, they found that 37 percent of residents were working more than 85 hours a week, while 20 percent worked more than 95 hours a week. One resident worked 136 hours. Remember, these are the people we trust our lives with. "This is a wake-up call," the state health commissioner told *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal.* But four months later, the alarm was still being ignored. In September a doctor stood before a group of applicants for surgical residency in New York City hospitals and told them: "You've probably heard that New York forbids you to work more than 80 hours a week." He paused, and looked around the room. "Forget it. You'll be working 120 to 140."

Yet what's *really* shocking is that these stories have become clichés, a regular feature on *ER* and in cocktail conversation. Everyone seems to know that we treat our medical trainees like galley slaves, and that next to nothing has been done about it. What fewer people know is that Uncle Sam has a lot of money riding on this problem, as well as a hefty share of the responsibility. New York State has paid its teaching hospitals almost $2 billion since 1989 to comply with the Bell regulations—or rather, not to comply with them. Nationally, the federal government pours nearly $7 billion a year into graduate medical education, with almost no oversight. "There's enough money within the system to fix the problem," says Alan Sager, a professor of public health at Boston University. In other words, our "Die Hard" method of training doctors isn't just a fact of life. It's something the rest of us have every right to be furious about, both as patients and as taxpayers.

Dead Tired

Ask a retired doctor in his 90s whether today's residents work too hard, and he's likely to laugh at you. The term resident, after all, dates back to the days when young doctors literally lived in the hospital for a few years after they finished medical school, so that they could observe the course of disease at all hours of the day and night. They were paid little more than room and board. By the 1940s, writes sociologist Paul Starr in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*, residents were no longer living in the wards. But their burden increased dramatically as large urban teaching hospitals realized they could double and triple their patient load, and the money that came with it, by handing off the extra work to their ill-paid residents.

This crushing workload made residency "a kind of tribal ritual," in the words of one doctor who trained in the 1950s. Older doctors expected the young men they trained to suffer just as brutally as they had. "It's paramilitary," one surgical resident told me. "The culture is, you don't complain, you smile and say give me more." These days residents are far more likely to be older, or female, and to be married with families. Yet the old attitudes persist to an amazing degree, particularly in surgery, which remains the toughest and most male-dominated medical specialty.

Moreover, the mental and physical challenges grow harsher every year. "Recently I looked at a copy of *Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*," one doctor who trained in the 1960s told David Ewing Duncan, author of *Residents*. "It's twice as fat as it was when I studied." In the old days a patient who had a heart attack in the middle of the night might simply die, letting the unwitting resident slumber on and find a corpse in the morning. Nowadays every patient's vital signs are monitored continuously, and any slip toward danger triggers a "code" signal, transforming the ward into a battlefield of shouting nurses and doctors. In busy hospitals, residents often find themselves called to be in several places at once, and must perform a near-continual triage during shifts that often last 36 hours nonstop. Thanks to profit-hungry managed care companies, patient turnover is much higher now than it used to be, and the patients tend to be sicker. All these things have "tremendously increased the burden on residents," according to one doctor who did his training in the mid-1960s.

Meanwhile, hospitals have an enormous financial incentive to push residents as hard as they can, because, as one resident told me, "we're cheap as hell." Although they make more than they did 50 years ago, residents are still paid close to minimum wage for the hours they work. According to one American Association of Medical Colleges study, residents' salaries actually dropped in real terms between 1970 and 1992. The same cannot be said of doctors or hospital administrators. In fact, they may be reaping a double benefit, because the federal government reimburses hospitals for their training programs based on the number of residents they hire. The amount the government shells out varies, and some hospitals claim to put so much money into the residents' education that they actually lose money in the bargain. Even if that's true—and many medical observers are skeptical—hospitals could easily absorb the cost, and make their residents' lives saner, if they didn't pay their doctors and administrators such sky-high salaries. A fifth-year surgical resident may be doing

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the same work as the doctor who's supposed to be supervising him, but he's pulling in about $30,000, while the surgeon could be making $600,000 or more, and the hospital CEO who determines those salaries could be making close to a million.

Most doctors will admit, when pressed, that these inequities are self-perpetuating: The deeper the hell of residency, the more entitled they feel to a heavenly salary. Needless to say, this trajectory of earned arrogance hasn't done a lot for the reputation of doctors. A few decades ago, the prototypical MD was a saintly figure, ministering selflessly to the sick with his black bag. Nowadays most people are more likely to picture a smirking technician in a lab coat who drives a late model Mercedes.

A survey published in JAMA in 1988 found that six out of seven surgical residents queried had fallen asleep at the wheel after being on call in the hospital all night.

The system isn't exactly good for patients either. "I don't know of anyone who signs a form saying they will let themselves be taken care of by neophytes," one doctor told me. Especially when those neophytes are so exhausted they're falling asleep on their feet. When patients find out what's really going on in teaching hospitals, they're liable to get very angry—which is exactly what happened to the Zion family in 1984.

Remember Zion

Early on the morning of March 4, 1984, an 18-year-old female patient at New York Hospital tore the IV from her arm and tried to climb out of her bed, her face glowing with a high fever. Baffled and anxious, the nurses called for help, but neither the attending doctor nor the residents on duty came to the girl's bedside. A few hours later her fever worsened and she died. No one knows exactly why; the residents suspected she was on cocaine, but never tested her for it.

If she had been an ordinary middle-class child, or the daughter of an immigrant, Libby Zion's fate would not have become synonymous with the effort to reform the residency system. But her father was Sidney Zion, a cigar-chomping columnist for the *New York Daily News* and a former federal prosecutor. Zion soon discovered that the residents in charge of his daughter had made several important mistakes that could have caused her death, and convinced Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau to bring charges to a grand jury for possible criminal indictment. In November 1985 the grand jury did indeed issue an indictment—not of New York Hospital or the doctors Zion had named, but of American medical education as a whole. Denouncing the state's residency system as "counterproductive to providing quality medical care," the grand jury asked the state to establish new rules to insure that residents received adequate supervision.

The state responded by naming a blue-ribbon committee led by Dr. Bertrand Bell of Brooklyn's Einstein Medical Center. In 1989, the Bell Commission's rules became law. They included not only strict guidelines on supervision for doctors, but an 80-hour cap on the time residents could legally work per week. The figure was set as an average over four weeks, so that hospitals could remain flexible in case of emergencies. On-call shifts were limited to 24 hours, and time off became mandatory. The Bell rules even included special exemptions for surgeons under certain circumstances.

In any other profession, these limits would seem absurdly modest. Yet they sparked a firestorm in the medical community, and it wasn't just the macho surgeons who were outraged. Amazingly, some doctors actually defended the practice of handing off patients to unsupervised residents. In testimony before Bell committee, a representative of the American College of Physicians offered the excuse that "over time, many clinical skills of senior attendings ... suffer from disuse atrophy," and that senior residents were therefore more qualified to teach younger ones (and, presumably, take care of patients) than the doctors themselves.

The arrogance of this claim is almost beyond belief. If a doctor is no longer capable of doing his own work—much less teaching his residents—why on earth should he be allowed to practice at all? Imagine a university professor telling a committee that he was no longer the best person to teach his students, because he hadn't read some of the books in decades. Then imagine that this professor was making a salary high in the six figures—possibly 20 times what his graduate students were living on.

Luckily for the rest of us, this kind of flagrant abuse appears to be on the wane. Three years ago the Health Care Financing Administration began crack-

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ing down on teaching hospitals that were allowing their doctors to bill Medicare for work their residents had done. The University of Pennsylvania health care system agreed to settle for $30 million after HCFA brought suit against it for such violations. Many of the doctors and residents I spoke to in other states told me they'd noticed an improvement in supervision since then. The one bright spot in the failing report card New York's Health Department issued to its hospitals last spring was that the residents appeared to be adequately supervised.

But the medical establishment is still overwhelmingly opposed to the Bell Commission's limits on work hours. Their best defense is something called "continuity of care." If you limited residents' hours and shifts, the argument goes, they'd have to hand off their patients more frequently, whether to other residents, nurses, or hired staff. This would be worse for the patients, since the substitutes wouldn't know them as well as the bleary-eyed residents who had admitted them in the first place. It would be worse for the residents too, since they wouldn't get to see the illness through its course, and would therefore not learn what they needed to know to become effective doctors.

It is true that continuity of care, in the abstract, is an important issue: seeing an illness all the way through helps doctors understand it better. As for the patient's perspective, if you've ever been in a hospital you know there's no substitute for having one doctor who knows your name, not seven who don't. At least one study has concluded that even fatigued residents are less likely to make serious mistakes than those who are doing "cross-coverage," that is, taking care of patients they did not admit.

But a number of other studies have arrived at the opposite conclusion—namely, that patient care is demonstrably better when tired residents hand off their work to a fresher trainee. A number of hospitals have instituted some form of "night float" system, in which residents take turns working a night shift so that the group as a whole can work more manageable hours. There is no evidence that these shifts—which have been around since the 1940s, though the boot-camp culture kept them from spreading until recently—are bad for patients. The United Kingdom and New Zealand passed laws years ago limiting their residents' workweeks to 56 and 72 hours respectively, and surveys suggest they're being enforced. There is no indication that quality of care in those countries has suffered.

The "continuity of care" argument also ignores the fact that when residents stay all night in the hospital, they're generally not taking care of patients. Much of their time is consumed with "scut" work—drawing blood, chasing down X-rays, moving patients around the hospital, and other grunt work. These "ancillary services" are supposed to be done by hired staff. But most hospitals let residents do the bulk of this work, since they're cheaper. After following residents in hospitals around the country for four years, author David Ewing Duncan found that most spend at least 20 percent of their time on this kind of work, with some claiming as much as 70 percent. If hospitals would hire staff the way they're supposed to, their trainees would have plenty of time to learn everything they needed to, without having to walk around in a sleep-deprived stupor.

In fact, this was part of the Bell Commission's solution. Most of the nearly $2 billion New York has paid its teaching hospitals since 1989 was supposed to provide more staff support. Somehow, the money has gone elsewhere.

Balm of Hurt Minds

It's not hard to see why hospitals continue to resist reform: exploiting interns and residents is good for the bottom line. But the human cost is catastrophic. In every field except medicine, the dangers of sleep deprivation have been catalogued and warned against. The Department of Transportation estimates that it causes one third of all truck fatalities and 56,000 auto accidents a year. It was a factor in the wreck of the Exxon Valdez, perhaps the greatest oil spill in history. The near-nuclear meltdown of the nuclear reactor at Three Mile Island in 1979 may be another example. In 1996 the Federal Aviation Administration, citing a long list of plane crashes caused by fatigue, reduced further the number of hours a commercial pilot could fly without rest. Why should young doctors, who have to perform far more intricate operations on deathly ill patients, be any different?

The latest research suggests they're not. A study published in the British scientific journal *The Lancet* concluded that lack of sleep had the same effect on surgeons' "psycho-motor" skills as being drunk. Surgeons often counter that adrenaline prevents them from making any serious errors in an operation. Even if this were true—and the endless anecdotes about surgeons falling asleep during operations suggest that it's not—no one questions the claim that tired doctors are bound to falter once the adrenaline wears off. "Giving the wrong antibiotic to a patient recognized as having sepsis is not a typical fatigue mistake, but failing to recognize sepsis at all is," concludes one

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recent journal article. "For this reason, fatigue-related errors of judgment are difficult to prevent and often disastrous." Tens of millions of TV viewers watched this happen on a recent episode of *ER* when Dr. Elizabeth Corday, an accomplished surgeon working excessive hours, accidentally gave an overdose of magnesium sulfate and sent the patient into a coma. A 1991 study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* found that 41 percent of residents polled listed fatigue as a major cause of errors, and in almost a third of the cases, they said these errors resulted in the death of the patient.

The dangers aren't confined to hospitals. An informal survey published in the *JAMA* in 1988 found that six out of seven surgical residents queried had fallen asleep at the wheel after being on call all night. Three had been involved in car accidents. "Falling asleep at the wheel post-call is virtually *universal*," one doctor wrote recently in a letter he forwarded to me. "I have not found anyone who has not had this problem."

A full reckoning of the effects of fatigue goes well beyond the obvious mistakes and crashes. "What sleep deprivation so insidiously and dangerously undermines," wrote one pediatrician to the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1989, "is the physician's ability to care about the patient and hence make appropriate judgments. How many of us know of times when, exhausted, we prescribed acetaminophen for a patient instead of doing a work-up for sepsis, ordered a sedative instead of seeing the patent, let our head drop back into the pillow after a worried nurse's call, or slowed our trot down in the hallway in the shameful, secret hope that the patient experiencing cardiac arrest would die before we got there?"

Sometimes indifference becomes outright hostility. Samuel Shem's 1978 novel *The House of God* shocked the world with its portrayal of overworked young doctors referring to their patients as "Gomers" (Get Out of My Emergency Room). Other terms of abuse are more common today: "reeker", "lizard," "turkey,""crock," and "trainwreck" are just a few. "Anger is so common," writes surgeon-journalist Atul Gawande, "that one Harvard residency program gives an award each year to its angriest interns." Another program boasts about its sky-high rates of divorce. A little nasty humor can be a good way to blow off steam. But it's alarming that doctors, of all people, are put through a process so dehumanizing that they can no longer tell the difference between what's funny and what's sick.

A New Prescription

"We wanted to change the culture," says Dr. Bell of his committee's landmark rules for residency programs. Almost a decade later, he admits sadly that it hasn't happened. Although the major accreditation body for residency programs has become a little stricter about working hours and conditions, New York hospitals continue to flout the rules, and no other state has adopted similar guidelines.

One obvious solution would be to train more residents, so that they could split up the work more equitably. But that's a non-starter, because the government has already declared that we suffer from a surplus of doctors, and is actually offering incentives to the states to train fewer. Needless to say, that's likely to *increase* the pressures on residents. Another route would be to find ways to make attending physicians help out with a shift here and there—as well as doing the supervision they're supposed to—so that the residents could get enough sleep. After all, the 4,000 nonteaching hospitals in this country manage to get by without exploiting residents. The hitch here is that doctors bring revenue to teaching hospitals, which are therefore eager to please them. And such doctors have their price. "They'll just go to another hospital if you try to make them take a pay cut or do more of the work," explains Lisa Watson of the Committee of Interns and Residents. It doesn't help matters that hospital CEOs, who are the highest-paid administrators in the nonprofit sector, don't see residents' work hours as a problem any more than doctors do.

The answer, therefore, has to begin with raising public awareness about the scope of the problem. If journalists would highlight the risks we run by subjecting ourselves to exhausted and undersupervised residents, hospitals might start to feel some pressure to change. "For a while [after the Bell rules became law] it was a real selling point that New York didn't have dead-tired residents," says Watson. If people knew more about the dangers, maybe New York's hospitals would be better about sticking to the rules.

Once the feds smelled some public outrage, they would have a motive to grab non-complying hospitals where it hurts: by the wallet. "It should cost them lots of money when they break the rules," says Bertrand Bell. Currently, New York hospitals found violating the law are fined, but apparently the fines are lower than what they save by exploiting residents. If we want to break medicine's macho culture, we're going to have to get tougher. In New Zealand, work-hour limits were ignored until the state imposed harsh financial penalties.

Outside New York, of course, the rules don't even exist to be enforced. But it would be simple enough for the federal Health Care Financing Administration—

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which has proved its willingness to crack down on Medicare fraud—to make compliance with Bell-style rules a condition of the reimbursements it gives hospitals for training residents. For help with enforcement, the government could also lean on the bodies that accredit hospitals. After all, no hospital can be licensed by a state, or receive Medicare reimbursements, until it is accredited by the Chicago-based Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. The Joint Commission is supposed to inspect all hospitals and ensure that they conform to national safety standards. So far they have done nothing about the problem of overwork and lack of supervision. When I called them to ask why, they told me they were "actively discussing these issues with the Department of Health in New York state." The feds pour nearly $7 billion a year into graduate medical education. If the White House could be persuaded that residents' working conditions are a serious threat to public health, it could make sure this "discussion" goes somewhere.

It's possible, of course, that teaching hospitals would claim they can't abide by the rules without more money. If so, the press would have a glorious opportunity to highlight the absurdity of that claim. The payment rules are now in flux, but some large teaching hospitals receive about $200,000 a year from the government per resident, with the resident taking home perhaps $40,000 of that. Some of the leftover money goes to resident education, and some covers the cost of treating the uninsured. Still, with doctors and administrators at large hospitals earning salaries high in the six figures, they'd have a hard time arguing that they couldn't make ends meet.

In the meantime, residents can press their case by organizing. Currently, only residents at public hospitals can join unions, because the National Labor Relations Board, which oversees private employers, considers house staff students and not employees. The New York-based Committee of Interns and Residents, the country's oldest residents' union, has made a legal challenge to that rule, and the NLRB will decide the issue in the next few months. If they rule in the unions' favor, the campaign for better working hours and conditions could get a sizable boost. "Hours are probably better in New York than the rest of the country, and it's no coincidence that most unionization of house staff is in New York," says Sandy Shea, legal counsel for the CIR.

It may seem like a tall order to sympathize with people who could soon be earning far more than most of us ever do. But if you don't want your anesthesia administered by a resident who's near-comatose himself, think again.

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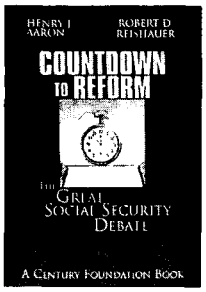

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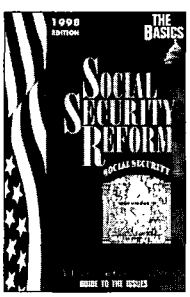

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We founded this magazine 30 years ago as part of a revolution in journalism. The new journalism sought to cloak bare-bones objective reporting with novelistic flesh. The *Monthly* also tried to add explicit analysis and a search for solutions to replace what was sometimes a concealed or unconscious bias underlying the old objectivity. By the 1990s, however, the revolution had been perverted: even lead stories in newspapers and the network news shows were being loaded with the reporter's point of view or his desire to appear clever. This problem concerned us enough to make it the feature of our 30th anniversary issue. We asked former *Monthly* editor Jonathan Alter to review the book *Just the Facts*, which traces the origins of "objective" reporting. And we asked our contributing editors and alumni for their opinions on the obligations of journalists to their readers.

~The Editors

JUST THE FACTS?

JONATHAN ALTER:

One of the most enduring visual images of the news business is the "zipper"—the electronic display belt (most famously in Times Square) that relays breaking news to passersby. "Pearl Harbor attacked," "FDR dead" "Space shuttle launched"—the zipper has always been concise, clear, and as "objective" as it is possible to be.

Until now. At the corner of 49th Street and Sixth Avenue in Manhattan, Fox News has a zipper that I like to watch when I have the chance. Many of the bulletins that move across the zipper include a cute little two- or three-word comment thrown in afterwards. The zipper has a little extra zip, usually from the conservative side where Fox and its owner Rupert Murdoch stand, and occasionally I get a chuckle out of it. Call it the respect of one wise guy for another. After all, for a decade I've been one of the authors of *Newsweek*'s Conventional Wisdom Watch, which each week makes snippy little comments about figures in the news. Before that, I laced my *Washington Monthly* articles with plenty of "attitude."

But I'm starting to have some second thoughts about my role in the "Attitude Revolution." It's one thing for magazines to try to be clever. Columnists and talking heads (I'm guilty of being both) can offer their opinions. But zippers are supposed to stay zipped up. The news sections of newspapers, like television anchors, are supposed to deliver the news straight. Textured reporting is welcome, but snide assessments of motive belong in feature pieces and magazines. Phrases like "In an effort to divert attention ..." and "In an attempt to appear presidential ..." should not be in the news section.

How did we get here? How did the walls start breaking down? I've got a few pet theories:

The End of the Cold War: The seriousness of the bipolar struggle tended to inhibit attitudinizing in the news pages. Starting in World War II, the press tended to define news as what government officials said or did on a given day, because those words and actions were at least distantly tied to our survival. Today's media climate is a return to the prewar racy standard, which was called "ballyhoo" during the 1920s. With the end of the Cold War, the stakes are smaller, which means we're more free to indulge in silly partisanship and triviality.

At the same time, the duality of the global struggle—and the duality embedded in a legal system that came to dominate much of American life—made people think that offering two sides to a story somehow made it fair. The clash of competing forces defined news—and led the way to truth. Or so the theory goes. The inadequacy of that adversary structure has become clearer since the Cold War ended, even as it insinuates itself deeper in the media culture.

Technology: The Internet lends itself to attitude and opinion—to the idea that everyone has his or her view, and that they are of equal value. And the fragmentation of media because of cable technology means that there's a lot more time to fill. Straight, "objective" news can't fill it. Just reporting straight news doesn't get you ahead in the intensely competitive world of TV news. Sad to say, audiences prefer chewing over old, sexy news to

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hearing fresh news that doesn't make the blood race. Newspapers have a different problem. They no longer bring people the headlines, which readers have heard on TV or radio. So they include more packaging, analysis and attitude in order to stay alive. That's not all bad; good analysis is important in a confusing world. But spin is cheaper to produce.

Baby boomers: When they were young, baby boomers wrote for college and underground papers that were more like the foreign press—long on opinion and shorter on facts. Boomers were often intensely political when they were young, and many stayed political even when real ideological differences faded. Axe-grinding that began over weighty issues like Vietnam has now extended to trivia. Moreover, some of those who became journalists also grew up believing that "stenographic" reporting was a bit below their ambitions, especially if they wanted to go on TV to analyze the news (I plead guilty again). For the academically inclined (and a growing number of them ended up in journalism), the whole idea of "objectivity" was contrary to deconstructionism, the still current academic fashion in which texts all contain hidden messages of bias and privilege. The unspoken logic: If "objectivity" is impossible, why try?

The cult of attribution: The decline of "objectivity" is partly an understandable reaction to journalism that sometimes made a fetish of attribution. One reason I was never comfortable working on newspapers was that I disliked having to attribute perfectly obvious facts to someone else. At most papers, basic statements of fact ("The sky is blue") were required to have a ludicrous level of attribution ("according to the National Weather Service"). A looser standard of attribution has mostly been a positive development in American journalism. *The New York Times*, for instance, is a better written, more interesting newspaper than in the past in part because of new standards of what's permissible in the news sections.

The wrong lens: The problem is that the *Times* and other news organizations are losing sight of what news is. In September, for instance, President Clinton signed an executive order offering (not just proposing) important new protections to 120 million Americans in HMOs. *The Times* gave the story three paragraphs on page 21. What was once a clear definition of news—a decision that affects large numbers of people—is no longer big news because it's not "hot." It doesn't lend itself to conflict, spin, secrecy, scandal and personal attacks or quirks—the new standards of news.

The public is hypocritical about all of this. Viewers complain about the poor news diet, but routinely zap cable shows (the networks are a different story) every time they turn away from Monica Lewinsky. Even so, there is a growing unhappiness about the direction of news coverage. Readers and viewers want "objectivity" back. The first step toward doing that is to understand where "objective" journalism came from in the first place.

Just the Facts: How Objectivity Came to Define American Journalism, by David T. Z. Mindich,* is a good place to begin. Mindich opens with the common but important caveat that there is no such thing as "true objectivity" and that the word should always be used with quotation marks around it. He quotes Sydney Gruson of *The New York Times*: "Pure objectivity might not exist, but you have to strive for it anyway." Christiane Amanpour, a now-famous reporter for CNN and CBS, recently gave a speech updating the old standard. "Objectivity," said Amanpour, "means giving all sides a fair hearing, but not treating all sides equally ... So objectivity must go hand in hand with morality."

As Amanpour suggests, some of the changes in the old, unthinking standard of "objectivity" have resulted from hard thinking about the issue, not just a desire to get ratings and readers with a few clever remarks. There are not "two sides" to the atrocities she reports on. Sometimes there are six sides to a story—or only one. And the conventions of the news business have been easily manipulated by people in power to inhibit the reporting of the truth. The charges of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, for instance, were reported "objectively."

Mindich doesn't deal with McCarthyism or other 20th century cases; he's more interested in the 19th century origins of "objectivity," and those origins are illuminating. Because this is an academic (though clearly written) book, he breaks down "objectivity" into its journalism textbook components: detachment, nonpartisanship, inverted pyramid, facticity and balance. Each arose as a journalistic convention as a result of particular developments in American history.

Detachment and non-partisanship come from the Jacksonian and immediate pre-Civil War eras. James Gordon Bennett, the founder of the *New York Herald*, ran a splenetic and vicious penny paper, but he was the first major newspaper owner who was associated with no party. He went back and forth, endorsing the Democrat in one presidential election, the Whig in another. More important, in agitating against another newspaper editor who advocated duels and once beat up Bennett himself, he pioneered the idea of peaceful,

**Just the Facts: How "Objectivity" came to Define American Journalism. David T.Z. Mindich. NYU Press, $24.95.*

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if vitriolic, means of resolving disputes. This kind of nonviolent non-partisanship was tremendously popular. And by mid-century, detachment and independence were beginning to sell as party papers faltered.

Soon the old strictly chronological, narrative newspaper style, where the news was buried in the 25th paragraph, also began to fade. It was replaced by the inverted pyramid, the structural underpinning of a modern news story, in which the most important facts come first, in a "lead," with other facts presented in descending order of importance. According to Mindich, this approach grew out of coverage of the Lincoln assassination in 1865. Lincoln's Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, the greatest press censor in American history, also originated the inverted pyramid. While war correspondents still filed flowery narratives, Stanton, who had total control of all new information, telegraphed the first terse bulletins from the war department. Stanton was also the first to use the conventions of "objectivity" to bolster authority. By the 1880s, it was standard for newspapers. The telegraph, which placed a premium on speed and economy of style, became an important technological tool of "objectivity."

I've noticed that the inverted pyramid is distinctly out of fashion on the news programs watched by the most viewers—TV news magazines. The basic story structure on "Dateline" is right out of 19th century journalism: a strong narrative with the news—the payoff—buried far down in the story in order to maintain suspense and keep people watching after the commercial breaks.

The purchase of *The New York Times* by Adolph Ochs in 1896 is often seen as a landmark in the development of "objectivity." While William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer pioneered yellow journalism, the *Times* was developing a sense of "balance" that would heavily influence journalism in the 20th century. But Mindich examines the case of Ida B. Wells, a former slave turned crusading journalist who showed how flawed the *Times'* "balanced" coverage of lynchings turned out to be. It's Wells' critique of phony balance—two sides to every story—that has informed the better critiques of objectivity today.

So how to balance the need for "objectivity" with good writing, good analysis, and good humor? Not easily. We should want reporters to analyze, reach conclusions, and write with style. The only answer I can envision is to erect a stronger firewall between anchors and commentators, between news shows and entertainment shows and between the news sections of a newspaper and the rest of the paper. The risk is boredom, lost ratings, and lost circulation. The reward would be greater confidence in what people watch and read. The good news is that truly partisan, biased news organizations don't make big money in the media game. In the last quarter century, the big profits have generally gone to reliable papers and networks with a reputation for some objectivity in their news sections. *The Wall Street Journal* and ABC News are more profitable than *The New York Post* and Fox TV. Smart news executives know this, and are watching the balance carefully

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ART LEVINE:

THE PRESIDENT UNDER SIEGE: LUCY AND THE JAPAN CRISIS

Washington, December 7, 1941—Ever since last week's disclosure of wheelchair-bound President Roosevelt's dalliance with social secretary Lucy Mercer, the President has been seeking to keep the country's attention on the mounting threat to America's overseas allies. Today was no exception to this public relations strategy, advisers say. Even though it was a Sunday, the crippled President, wearing his customary smoking jacket and sporting his jaunty cigarette holder, was wheeled into the Oval Office for a series of photo ops and meetings that sent a clear message: The President of the United States is hard at work protecting our interests.

Even so, the exposure of the Mercer affair, added to the recent spate of articles on the President's polio-induced handicap by *New York Daily News* gossip columnist Ed Sullivan, has severely damaged the President's political standing, analysts say. As Father James Coughlin, a Senior Fellow at the America-First Enterprise Institute, pointed out, "The President has to keep the public distracted, and a war may be the only way to do so."

The day's first meeting only added to the mood of impending crisis in the nation's capitol. Seated behind a desk, the President greeted War Secretary Henry Stimson with a hearty "Hello, Hank!" before turning to a discussion of the progress of the Lend-Lease Act, the shrewd legislative PR gambit that has increased war supplies to Britain, although some White House political advisers worry that it could draw America into an unpopular war—and drive down the President's approval ratings. Before lunch, to show he still retains the famed Roosevelt charm, he posed with his dog Fala, who barked playfully while seated on a red

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checkered blanket on his master's lap. "Don't worry, fellas," he joked to reporters, "his bark is worse than his bite. Kind of like [Prime Minister] Tojo."

The Japanese threat to Asia, though, is taken seriously at the White House—now more than ever. For months, the Administration has been engaged in diplomatic sparring with Japan over its aggressive moves against Indochina and China, even imposing a controversial oil embargo against a country that State Department insiders say is only seeking vital natural resources. The mounting strain between Japan and the U.S. seems to have reached the boiling point today, just as the President was enjoying a lunch of salmon and asparagus served by two uniformed White House stewards on the First Lady's favorite china, a wedding gift from that brisk March day in 1905 when the then-hopeful couple were married in a lovely outdoor ceremony at Hyde Park.

About 1 p.m., the President was interrupted by an urgent visit from his top aide, Harry Hopkins. "Yes, Harry?" the President inquired. "What's so important?" Hopkins, sources say, blurted out: "The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor, sir!" The President appeared genuinely surprised by the news, White House sources insist, although Republican critics, such as Montana Republican Jeannette Rankin, contend that the Pacific Fleet was moved to Hawaii to lure just such an attack. Whatever the truth of the allegation in a city abuzz with rumors, there's no question that President Roosevelt acted swiftly to summon Secretary Stimson and his other top advisers to learn the grim facts of the "surprise" attack, as the White House called it—and to shape an effective political response.

The White House has been torn by dissension over how to respond to the carnage in Hawaii and the subsequent Japanese declaration of war. The military damage is severe: The first wave of attacking planes arrived at 7:53 a.m., Hawaii time, and by the time it was all over, 2,400 servicemen were killed, nearly 200 planes were destroyed and the Pacific Fleet was crippled. But the question in Washington now is whether a President who is crippled both physically and politically has the capital needed to wage war against Japan. "When the President is speaking to the public about war, won't everyone have a thought bubble in their minds about the President in bed with Lucy Mercer? How can he be credible?" one Republican strategist wondered.

Today, there's furious debate among the President's advisers about the tone of the speech the President is scheduled to deliver Monday before Congress. One version, drafted by Hopkins, reportedly refers to December 7 as "a date which will live in infamy," and asks for a declaration of war. But another team of advisers, led by Vice President Henry Wallace, has been urging instead a tamer version that refers to December 7 as a "date which will live forever in our saddened hearts" and urges in no uncertain terms an immediate resumption of the stalled negotiations with Japan over the U.S. oil embargo. The President, weighing the various options and concerned about potentially negative media coverage, hasn't yet decided which course to take. Only time will tell.

ART LEVINE *is a contributing editor for* U.S. News & World Report.

TIMOTHY NOAH:

Two imperatives in contemporary journalism are at war with one another. One imperative says: Be smart! Be analytic! Be like *The Washington Monthly* or *The New Republic* or *The Weekly Standard*! The other imperative says: Don't say anything that will make your readers—or, more important, your sources—mad! Don't lose significant leaks from government sources, which still matter a lot, to the competition! The first imperative boils down to being subjective; being so intelligently and fair-mindedly will benefit a reporter's career over the long run.

The second imperative boils down to being rigorously neutral. This is no longer the path to glory in a journalistic career, but analysis-free reporting remains a useful skill—sometimes you just want to know, Did the bill pass? Did the Red Sox win? What is the disagreement between party A and party B all about?—and solid careers can be built on it.

The trouble arises when a reporter, torn between the imperative to be smart and the imperative to not rock the boat, tries to have it both ways. One common corruption arising from this dilemma is to be snide. Nobody can prove you think that the Clinton health-care bill is a nightmare of red tape, but you can still communicate the general idea. "There are ways of saying it, without actually saying it," a seasoned *New York Times* reporter once told me. Another corruption is to sculpt your analysis to resemble prevailing biases so perfectly that no one is likely to complain. (When readers or sources bitch about "biased" reporting, what they almost always mean is reporting whose biases they disagree with.) Thus you can portray a Ralph Nader or a Jesse Helms as a hopeless boob simply because he isn't working within the mainstream.

Ultimately, it's best for reporting to strive to be neither "analytic" nor "neutral," but simply to be fair-

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minded and truthful based on a detailed examination of the matter at hand. A good reporter who is well-steeped in his subject matter and who isn't out to prove his cleverness, but rather is sweating out a detailed understanding of a topic worth exploring, will probably develop intelligent opinions that will inform and perhaps be expressed in his journalism. It is very difficult to be a blowhard on a subject one has studied extensively and from many angles. The extent to which the reporter spells out his assumptions and follows them to their logical conclusions may vary, but whether the result is a work of "opinion" journalism or "objective" journalism matters less than that the writer's objective is to inform, not to impress. ●

> "Journalism has become, to an astonishing degree, self-referential, like a tribe cut off from the rest of the world."

TIMOTHY NOAH *co-authors* Slate's *"Chatterbox" column and is a contributing editor for* George *Magazine.*

DAVID IGNATIUS:

It is endearing of Charlie Peters to sponsor a symposium calling for more objective, less opinion-laden journalism. Can this be the same beloved, raccoon-eyed editor who used to hector his editors when they offered up an overly fact-laden piece: "Where's the gospel?" The same man who infuriated dozens of America's leading journalists by writing his own opinions into their pieces? The same man who coined the term "rain dance" to describe his efforts to put more of a writer's heart and soul into a piece?

You have to wonder: Can our own mischievous, opinion-drenched Huck Finn really have turned into Tom Sawyer? Or Robert Pear?

A chary editor might have suggested to Charlie that, instead of a symposium, this topic might make a good "Tilting" item (long the preferred way to deal with the boss's momentary obsessions). Or perhaps another volume in Charlie's autobiography. But as it happens, Charlie has something going for him in this new crusade for "Just the Facts." He's right.

Let me begin (inevitably) by defending my own newspaper, *The Washington Post.* The danger of too much opinion and spin on the front page isn't something we've just discovered. The *Post*'s top editors during the '90s, Leonard Downie and Robert Kaiser, tried hard to suppress tendentious writing and gratuitous analysis in news stories. Kaiser, in particular, became exasperated at those introductory clauses that begin so many newspaper stories: "In a move intended to deflect the House impeachment inquiry, President Clinton yesterday announced..." Or: "Despite growing criticism of his divisive record as House Speaker, Newt Gingrich yesterday proposed..." Such leads had become all too common at the *Post.* They were a product of the emphasis over the last two decades on interpretive, analytical journalism (encouraged by, let's be frank, a certain humble West Virginia lawyer and his band of anti-elitist Harvard grads).

Kaiser decided to do something about this trend toward manipulative, opinion-saturated "news" leads. He banned them. Specifically, he enunciated something that came to be known at the *Post* as the "Kaiser Rule." Reporters were forbidden to begin a story with any kind of explanatory clause, whatsoever. I'm sure people can find examples of this rule being violated, but on major front-page stories, it stuck. To reporters who complained that their analytical stories had been neutered ("Jeez, Bob, Clinton was deflecting attention...," etc., etc.), Kaiser would answer with a memorable dictum first postulated by the *Post*'s editor in the '50s, J. Russell Wiggins: "The reader deserves one clean shot at the facts."

That may be a good motto for the new, new journalism. Don't tell people what to think. Present readers with information, as cleanly and clearly stated as possible, along with context that gives them a chance to make up their own minds what it means.

To be sure (as we used to say when I worked at *The Wall Street Journal,* where every front-page story was supposed to have a "to-be-sure graph" that allowed the possibility that the thesis of the surrounding story was false), there's a place for analysis. The front page of any great newspaper needs good analytical writing that helps people make sense of the world. And it needs vivid, colorful writing that brings home the intensity and visceral reality of events to readers.

That's the business that newspapers are in now—at a time when people usually know the basic facts about a big story before they pick up the paper, from television, radio or the Internet. Our job is explaining the world—providing meaning and context and a way of ordering the world. That's what a newspaper front page is, essentially—a daily ordering of the world that establishes the seven or eight topics the editors think

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are most worthy of a reader's attention. That's a subjective and interpretive mission, inescapably. But it's not an excuse for violating the Kaiser Rule. Readers do deserve one clean shot at the facts.

The *Post* has taken some grief in the profession for Downie's and Kaiser's emphasis on traditionalism. The buzz on the street has been that the *Post* was less experimental, less daring, less open to "personal" writing, less "fun." Some of this criticism was misplaced; some of it was probably valid. But it's worth noting that the changes in the *Post* resulted from Downie's and Kaiser's deliberate efforts to steer the ship away from the rocks that Charlie Peters is now sighting. Indeed, I have to ask where Charlie was during all those years the *Post* was getting drubbed by media gossips for being a little *dull.*

The biggest danger I encountered in my years as an editor was a reflexive cynicism among some reporters that led them to assume they knew what a story was about, before they had actually done the reporting. They would begin with an assumption of who the good guys and bad guys were, and then organize the facts around that hypothesis. Sometimes, reporters were so confident about their *a priori* hypotheses that they would make only the most perfunctory, last-minute efforts to contact the "bad guys." ("Mr. Jones couldn't be reached for comment." "Mr. Jones failed to respond to a reporter's inquiry.")

This sort of cynicism is so common that it has become a journalistic stereotype. But it's actually the opposite of the fundamental journalistic values of curiosity and skepticism. The reason you call people for comment (and keep calling them until you get them) is because you want to get it right. A good reporter lives in terror of the possibility that his elaborately constructed hypothesis is *wrong*—that the last phone call he makes will reveal that the real story is something different from what he had assumed. Interestingly, in my experience, the very best reporters rarely exhibit the stereotypical cynicism and arrogance that people have come to associate with the profession. Bob Woodward isn't that way. David Broder isn't; David Remnick isn't; Kate Boo isn't; David Maraniss isn't. These people couldn't gather the stories they do without being genuinely curious about the world and open to new information.

The reflexive cynics in our business tend to be the burn-outs: the has-beens or never-weres. Most of all, they're the television people, who affect a world-weary know-it-all-ism that the public has, quite rightly, come to loathe. If ever there was an unearned cynicism, it's the kind found among these TV celebrities and pundits. Many of them haven't chased a fire truck, let alone covered a war.

A final impediment to giving readers one clear shot at the facts is the journalistic tendency to keep score—especially in covering the White House. There seems to be an unquenchable need to record, on a daily basis, whether the president is up or down, whether he had a good week or a bad week, whether he continues to be "dogged by scandal" or has "triumphed over his critics." This running box score is often nonsensical; there is no real event whatsoever being described, only an imaginary battle for influence. And often the scorekeeping obscures what actually is going on—the particular legislative debate or foreign-policy crisis that reporters see as a backdrop for the real issue: Is he up? Is he down?

What reporters really mean when they write this daily form sheet on the presidency is: What do my colleagues in the press corps think? What's the consensus opinion of the handful of people I talked to today? To call that sort of work "bad journalism" is charitable. It isn't journalism at all. There isn't a fact in sight.

DAVID IGNATIUS *has worked at* The Washington Post *as Outlook Editor, Foreign Editor and Assistant Managing Editor for Business News.*

JOSEPH NOCERA:

To my mind, the big problem with American journalism is not so much that it is snarky, or that opinions have crept into news stories, or that it is more often about attitude and showing off than about facts—though all of that strikes me as plainly true. Rather, it is that journalism—especially the journalism practiced by political print reporters, which is the concern of this magazine—has lost its way. Once, these were the people through whom politicians made their cases to the nation; now, thanks to Larry King et al., they have been stripped of that role, and they simply don't know what to do anymore.

So they practice "gotcha" journalism. The cover process rather than policy. They get caught up in spin, and who's-doing-what-to-whom and all the rest of it. It's a kind of journalism of nihilism—for it doesn't really believe in anything except itself. Journalism has become, to an astonishing degree, self-referential, like a tribe cut off from the rest of the world. When Maureen Dowd, the current queen of the tribe, and others of her ilk sneer at those who would like to see a journalism that actually cares about things the country cares about, that's when their cards are most on the table. The notion has become practically incompre-

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hensible. Note, also, by the way, how the only people she ever quotes in her Ain't-I-One-Smart-Cookie op-ed columns are her fellow journalists.

The late Theodore White gets blamed a lot for starting us down this path. He, of course, was the first political writer to add detail and color to political reporting—to make process come alive. And it is certainly true that other reporters picked up his techniques—and then drove them into the ground through sheer overkill. But what has long been forgotten is that White had a tremendous—and completely unembarrassed—passion for the country, for its people and its problems, its strengths and weaknesses. And he was never afraid to display that passion in his books. He would, for instance, regularly include lengthy chapters interpreting the latest census data in his *Making of the President* series, as well as chapters that had nothing to do with process and everything to do with the problems facing the country. The craft it took in writing those chapters was astonishing, for this was material that was difficult to bring to life. But it was important, and he *cared*, so he made the effort. When the day comes that Maureen Dowd can bring herself to leave Monica and Bill behind and writes a column about the census, you'll know that political journalism has begun to find its way again. Me, I'm not holding my breath. ●

JOESEPH NOCERA *is editor at large of* Fortune *magazine.*

JAMES FALLOWS:

The problem the *Monthly*'s getting at is not confined to news stories with loaded lead-ins. ("Dogged by criticism of his role in the Lewinsky case, President Clinton today raised a man from the dead with the slightest touch of his hand.") It's just as common, and has an even longer history, in the portentous-sounding but vapid zingers that end the typical TV or radio news report. ("The president may have conquered death today. Whether he can beat Kenneth Starr tomorrow ... *is not so clear.*") And whether used at the beginning of a story or the end, such fillips are not the real problem. The menace is the incredibly shallow, incurious, and cynical view of life that lies behind them.

Within limits, the effort to put attitude into a news story is a worthy one—or, at a minimum, one this magazine should be slow to condemn. In one way or another it has urged for years that reporters use as many tools as they can to share what they've seen—what they know—with the reader. It was in this very magazine, a mere 25 years ago, that I wrote (at the ~~dic-tation~~ suggestion of the editor) a review of Ward Just's book of short stories, *The Congressman Who Loved Flaubert.* The point of that review, and of other *Monthly* articles *passim*, was that a Flaubert-like, novelistic sensibility can add to a full understanding of public life. This was in contrast to the preceding "just the facts" wire-service ethic that led some of the funniest people in the press to write dull, constipated stories and to use euphemisms like "tired and emotional" to describe politicians who were drunk and stuporous on the Senate floor.

Yes, there should be places where the facts come through straight and plain. The lead of a story is usually such a place. Yes, there should be clues to the reader about what is a clear-as-we-can-make-it factual summary and what is the extra interpretation. But trying to move beyond the straight facts is not the big problem here.

The problem, I think, is that the people writing these stories are less interested, and therefore less interesting, than reporters really need to be. The mark of a great reporter is boundless curiosity—a desire to find out all there is to know. Name your era, and anyone we think of as a great reporter from that time was distinguished by omnivorous curiosity. Stephen Crane in Cuba. Charles Dickens roaming through America. John Hersey in Hiroshima. James Agee in the South. The grossly underrated John Gunther, in his *Inside* series of books. They made their mistakes, but they wanted to learn every single thing they could about as many topics as they could.

Today's most famous journalists, by comparison, (a) spend a much larger proportion of their time spitting out opinions and predictions, especially on TV, rather than taking in new material, and (b) are curious about a much narrower slice of the world. It's somewhat exaggerated, but basically fair, to say that today's pundit and star political-writer class is not driven by fascination about the world in general, or even about politics in the broadest sense. Rather, its members are fascinated by one specific question: which politicians are gaining or losing power. That's why they package every public event in a "Dogged by criticism..." wrapping. That's why they spend so much time on pointless prediction and speculation about future shifts in strength. That's also why they're so cynical, since boiling life down to this one simple struggle is as deadening as any other reductionist view. (Imagine a coroner who let his dealings with other people be reduced to calculations of how long before they showed up on his slab.)

The game of musical chairs that leaves some people in office and some out is a legitimate topic. But it

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makes up about 2 percent of what's significant and interesting in life. As long as it occupies most of the imagination of the political-writer class, their claim on the public imagination will shrink.

JAMES FALLOWS *is author of six books, most recently* Breaking the News.

JONATHAN ROWE:

The problem is not just smart-alecky journalists who grind their axes on the front page. The tendentious numb-brained quality of much American journalism today is largely a product of its forms. Daily journalism is frozen in a set of rituals and conventions that preclude nuance and provide formalistic cover for lazy thinking and reporting.

A few suggestions.

Ditch the Inverted Pyramid. This antiquated form requires that a story be about one thing, called the lead. It pushes the reporter to highlight the egregious—the outrageous charge, the gaffe—and often the irrelevant. The relentless built-in metronome sends the story barreling past the questions that are screaming to be raised. Instead there is ritualistic balance in the form of opposing (and generally imbecilic) quotes.

The inverted pyramid is a remnant of the days of telegraph. Telling the story over and over in increasing detail, it provided insurance against the breakdowns in transmission which were common. Today it provides a cookie-cutter form that makes stories easy to write and cut on deadline. These are valid concerns, but they do not justify the violence the form does to the presentation of reality. The inverted pyramid works okay for car wrecks, fires and shootings. For anything more complicated—a congressional debate, for example—the journalist should simply strive to write as an honest and intelligent person relating an event to others.

Enough Idiotic Quotes. The quote has become the main crutch of American journalism, and a source of continual idiocy in reporting. No statement is too obvious or banal to find its way onto the front page of *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times.* Henry Hyde says that impeachment is a grave and solemn constitutional duty. Clinton's pollster says the public wants Congress to move on to other things. What else are they going to say?

Quotes generally are a form of show and tell. They do not convey insight or information. They enable the reporter to say "See! I did some reporting." "See! I'm getting both sides." We all know how this game works. Build the story around the sources who echo your own view. Trot out the dissenting voice in a way that makes clear you are holding your nose. Present a formalistic ritual of balance instead of writing the story with a fair mind.

Quotes also have become a symptom of authority journalism, which I will get to in a moment. The answer is to cut them drastically. Reporters should take responsibility for the truth of their own story. They should determine that truth as best they can, in the time available, and then tell that story. They should quote only when it adds real insight or information, not to show that they called both Gephardt and Livingston and therefore have both sides. To get started they might read the *Economist* magazine, and then go and do likewise.

Exile the Experts and Spinners. American journalism is rapidly turning into authority journalism. The question is not what happened but what some authority said happened. Greenspan said, not what actually is. Hyde or Clinton said, not any action that actually ensued. A fair percentage of front page stories are not stories at all. They are Big Shot Says stories. Nothing really happened. Instead some big shot said something and the media trumpets it as though something happened.

The Greenspan Says mode of journalism has had a noxious effect upon Washington, a city that has plenty such effects already. It turns the front pages into a spin fest, and encourages the entire city to compete for room on that stage. If Greenspan can say, everyone else wants to say too. People put more energy into contrived saying than into actually getting something done.

The corollary to this pathetic theater is the use of established authority as a substitute for truth. The journalistic standard becomes what a Martin Feldstein says about the economy, what a Norman Ornstein says about Congress, instead of what is true about these. Among other things, authority journalism keeps reporting stuck firmly in the conceptual status quo. If truth is what conventional authorities say, then there's never room for a new idea or an unconventional truth—which is why such ideas always get banished to the journalistic margins. Behind a formalistic façade of "objectivity," the journalist becomes a stenographer for an authority's subjectivity.

My friend Sam Smith of the *Progressive Review* has proposed a simple solution: Give the authorities, experts and opinionizers their own page. The front page should tell us what happened, the way the old colonial newspapers did. No Greenspan Says stories, no dueling quotes. Just what happened. (Often we'd find

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out that not much happened, which wouldn't be the worst revelation.) Greenspan et al. could do their saying on an inside page, where he and his fellow spinners—from political consultants to those ubiquitous Wall Street "analysts"—could hold forth to their hearts' content.

Play It Again, Please. Washington journalism has no memory. Reporters approach the capital each day as though nothing has happened in this city before. Partly this is a cheap literary device and pose that enables reporters to feign shock—*shock*—when, say, a member of Congress carries water for a big contributor. But it has a more serious implication, too: Reporters never hold authorities and experts—or even politicians—to account for their stupidities of the past.

Reporters quote what Gingrich said yesterday, but ignore what he said a year or two ago that proved to be entirely wrong. They'll cite the dire warnings of some Wall Street analyst regarding a proposed tax increase, but not mention that analyst's equally dire warning a few years back that was totally off base. Congress could take the lead on this. It could require experts who testify to prepare a list of their prognostications of, say, the past five years. Then the rest of us could know whom we are listening to. The media should do the same, and it should revisit past pronouncements. Those economists and members of Congress who predicted economic collapse if Clinton's early budget was enacted—what do they say now, and why should we listen to them now?

JONATHAN ROWE *is a senior fellow at Redefining Progress.*

MICHAEL KINSLEY:

All magazines aspire to be factually accurate. Beyond that, their goals vary. Some claim and even actually try to be totally "objective," eschewing all opinion or, as *Newsweek* used to claim years ago, separating fact from opinion. This is a futile goal (are you going to be objective and avoid any opinion about child molesting?), but aiming for it is a perfectly legitimate strategy. So is what I take to be the current strategy of *Time* and *Newsweek*, which is not to have any overt or even covert ideological bias, but to liberate writers from the constraints of objectivity and not to worry excessively if it all averages out as a tilt one way or the other. And that's roughly where we are at *Slate*.

Another approach is to publish opinion frankly labeled as such but aim for "balance" of views (always, of course, within a spectrum of acceptable opinion). I suppose *Foreign Affairs* falls into this category, along with the newspaper op-ed pages. Or you can have a public ideological tilt but not enforce it too ruthlessly, or you can just be ideologically confused. *The New Republic* has straddled those categories for the two decades I've been associated with it.

All these strategies are conceptually muddy and force you to draw impossible lines between fact and opinion, opinion and bias, and so on. Only *The Washington Monthly* has a strategy that makes it easy to be honest. It says: Look, we're not putting this magazine out for our health (or, God knows, our wealth). We're here to publish the truth as best we can determine it. That includes both the truth about factual matters and the truth about policy and other matters of opinion. We don't wear our opinions as decorations—we hold them because we believe they're true. We wouldn't tell our readers that Miami is north of Chicago. Why would we tell our readers that the Postage Stamp Reform Act of 1999 is a good thing if we think it's a bad thing?

Furthermore (goes the unspoken *Monthly* credo) if we don't have an opinion about the PSRA, we haven't done our job. We should study it and develop one before writing about it. (What's the point of writing about the relative latitudes of Miami and Chicago if you're not going to give the answer?) And if, after studying it, we're truly of two minds, our views are of no use to the reader and we should write about something else.

Like many elements in *The Washington Monthly* gospel, this philosophy takes an important truth (the futility of objectivity) and extrapolates it until it begs for mercy. The *Monthly* approach is a useful part of the journalistic mix, but why must it be the One True Path? After all, the *Monthly* couldn't be put out without *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. It gets most of its information directly or indirectly from publications whose philosophy it disapproves of. Why can't we all just get along?

Michael Kinsley is editor of Slate *magazine (www.slate.com).*

SCOTT SHUGER:

It's progress that most of us no longer view journalism as simply the gathering of facts. Some facts are more important than others. We know that what readers should get isn't the facts but the story. A newspaper should help us decide what events mean, and to do this, writers and editors have to interpret, opine, explain, disregard, and emphasize. In short, they have to write and edit. But what's wrong is when newspa-

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pers try to hide this aspect of what they do. When they cloak themselves in the myth of objectivity. The reader, in his quest to get the story, is entitled to know what particular point of view the particular story in his hands is told from. Only then can he be an informed news consumer, able to get out of this particular tale what's in it and well advised about what else he still needs to know.

So it's not the point of view, but the smuggled-in point of view that's got to go. Last fall, a front-page *Los Angeles Times* story reported that as part of the last-minute budget deal, then-Sen. Alfonse D'Amato won approval of a provision requiring health insurance companies to cover post-mastectomy reconstructive surgery. The paper then immediately explained that D'Amato did this to undercut the strong support among women enjoyed by his election opponent, Charles Schumer. It was just assumed without comment that D'Amato had only this motivation. No consideration was given to the idea that D'Amato might be actually concerned about women not being able to afford reconstructions. If D'Amato was indeed so coldly single-minded, that at least is something the paper needed to support with some facts, such as his past voting record on women's health issues. But to flatly ascribe the basest motive to him in passing is precisely smuggling opinion in. As this episode shows, this journalistic offense cuts across ideological lines—liberals are just as guilty as conservatives.

Financial reporting often keeps its agenda hidden. Last October, when a computer problem halted trading at the New York Stock Exchange for about an hour, all the papers gave precise accounts of the standstill with one glaring exception: not one mentioned the brand of computer that failed. This is like reporting a plane crash without mentioning the type of plane, an extraordinary level of incuriosity, helping to protect that company's stock price, but not helping anybody understand what went wrong or what other computer systems are likewise vulnerable. Also, when around the same time, the yield on 30-year Treasury bonds dipped below 5 percent for the first time ever, most of the reporting came wrapped in the alarm the development prompted among stockholders and bond buyers, but generally did not explain that this was very good news for a much larger group of Americans—those trying to secure a home mortgage.

"The biggest danger I encountered in my years as an editor was a reflexive cynicism among some reporters that led them to assume they knew what a story was about, before they had actually done the reporting."

And sometimes it's public sentiment that cows newspapers out of raising questions. For instance, the coverage of John Glenn's space mission (with the notable exception of *The New York Times* editorial page) was positively boosterish. News stories gave no meaningful space to the idea that Glenn's involvement was pure PR. And even though the shuttle suffered the potentially dangerous loss of a protective panel during launch, none of the papers the next day mentioned NASA's previous "special" astronaut, Christa McAuliffe.

Perhaps the height of illicit editorializing in newspapers is the news photo. With all the pictures available of the likes of Bill Clinton or Newt Gingrich, is it ever really necessary to run a picture of them with a dopey expression or a finger in the ear? In a recent *New York Times* "Week in Review" section, alongside a story about politicians speaking their minds about other countries, was a looming picture of Al Gore, cropped so close that none of his hair is visible and you can see the sweat that's bubbling out of every giant pore in his face. The verbal equivalent of the picture—"Gore, looking like a crazed criminal with something to hide, said,"—would never pass muster. Therefore, the picture shouldn't either.

What to do about smuggled-in point of view? Well, readers should ask themselves, "Whose interests are being served by this story told this way and whose are being left out? And they should communicate what they find out to the papers via letters to the editor and via the papers' on-line sites. When editors learn that readers are becoming more sophisticated about what's missing, their stories are more apt to include it. For instance, now that the big papers know that readers are aware of the political role of spin and counterspin, they more often tend to include in their political stories a discussion of the possible spins. (An excellent example was *The New York Times* piece last August breaking the news that President Clinton was considering using as a defense against perjury his claim to be wielding a certain definition of sex. The story was not only a White House trial balloon, but it explained that it was.)

And the beat system in force at most papers should be modified. Much of a story's hidden point

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of view comes not from some sort of grand conspiracy but from when reporters have too much familiarity with the culture of the institution(s) being covered, so much so that assumptions held by participants in the culture creep seamlessly into the journalists' reporting and writing. Correspondingly, an able reporter who is less familiar with the cultural assumptions is more apt to question them and look at them in a fresh way. A reporter coming off a Pentagon tour might ask great questions at City Hall, and vice versa. To maintain a paper's institutional memory, you still need reporters with lots of experience on a beat, but they should generally be paired with another reporter with commensurate experience but in another area. In other words, half of a papers' reporters should be kept cycling through. ●

SCOTT SHUGER *writes the "Today's Papers" column for* Slate.

MATTHEW MILLER:

At the major outlets that shape public discussion—*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the big three network news shows, say—the interesting issue may not be "objectivity," but the simple fact that picking which stories to lead with or put on page 1 is an exercise of enormous and unaccountable power. It may not feel this way to the editors and producers who make these judgments, since they're simply "putting out the paper" or "putting on the show." Still, it's hard to imagine a set of daily decisions that have more influence on the quality and content of public life.

The question is how to make the exercise of this power more accountable or responsible. One answer might be for editors and producers to explain to audiences at regular intervals what went into their news judgment. Imagine if the *Times* or the *Post* assigned a reporter to "cover" their internal page one meetings, and then produce a piece for Sunday that detailed the considerations that went into the make-up of page one that week—along with any doubts, second thoughts, conflicts, etc. A note from the editor or similar report would also suffice, so long as the effect was the same: to 'fess up to what every reader already knows—that the press is not just reporting the news, but choosing what is news. By demystifying this process, such an effort would take the press off one of its high horses and treat citizens as adults. I'd also bet it would be a hit with readers. And it would set an example. If a few top outlets made something like this a regular practice, does anyone doubt it would have a ripple effect? Conversely, if none were willing routinely to explain and defend their news judgments, it would suggest how little difference there is between the way media heavies and top political officials prefer to exercise power—in secret. ●

Matthew Miller is a senior writer at U.S. News and World Report *and a nationally syndicated columnist.*

WALTER SHAPIRO:

As an occasional participant in big-think conferences bemoaning the downward drift of contemporary journalism from its former Olympian heights, I can furrow my brow, sadly shake my head and invoke the sainted memory of Walter Lippmann and Edward R. Murrow with the best of them. But as adept as I am at the public rituals of high-minded hand-wringing, I do wonder if all these lamentations are really necessary. For all my distaste for the preening egos on food-fight TV talk shows, for all my discomfort with the frenzied excesses of gotcha journalism, I do cling to the Panglossian belief that workaday reporters for our major newspapers are doing a good job in the face of sweetheart-get-me-the-Maalox deadline pressures.

So what are Charlie Peters and many of my fellow spear carriers in the *Monthly* alumni army so apoplectic about? Let's start with Charlie's pet peeve which he has often repeated, most recently on "Meet the Press." As Charlie instructed Tim Russert, "President Clinton made a speech in August from the Vineyard announcing an executive order giving protection against HMO abuse to 125 million Americans. *The New York Times* gave that three paragraphs on Page 30." Yes, Clinton unveiled this executive order in his August 29 radio address, and the *Times* the next day erred by downplaying it with a brief AP story. But this is far from an outrage like the Miami Herald skulking in the bushes to spy on Gary Hart and Donna Rice.

Now we'll put this miscue by an unknown weekend *Times* editor in context. Remember, these were not exactly ordinary times. The vacationing Clinton had been a virtual recluse on Martha's Vineyard for the prior 10 days, nursing his wounds from Monica Madness rather than mulling high policy. The HMO executive order may indeed prove to be the second coming of the New Deal, but Clinton himself devoted most of his five-minute radio address to rehashing old arguments about his already abundantly covered legislative plan for an HMO Bill of Rights. Moreover, Clinton normally uses these Saturday radio speeches to announce Dick Morris-style small-deeds fluff. Major policy initiatives, in contrast, are presented with

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the trumpet flare of detailed fact sheets and on-the-record briefings by Cabinet officials and senior White House aides. But Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, who is responsible for implementing this HMO executive order, wasn't invited to Martha's Vineyard. Nor were top advisors like Gene Sperling and Bruce Reed on hand to answer questions. Small wonder the *Times* and the rest of the press missed the story of a lifetime.

Since the early days of the Nixon administration (it's kind of embarrassing to admit that we all go back that far), the *Monthly* has been rightly stressing another kind of truth about the White House press corps. No matter how talented and hard-working, White House reporters are prisoners with golden handcuffs, trapped by the exalted prestige of their beat. They are forced to take their cues from press handlers and spin masters as they react to the torrent of often manufactured news emanating from the Oval Office. And, yes, they often become afflicted with a variant of the Stockholm Syndrome. It's certainly not that these reporters love their captors, but they do adopt the dominant value system of their jail. If the White House looks at every issue through the narrow lens of polls and political positioning, reporters in their stories will reflect the cynical world view of a Chicago wardheeler. Answer me this: Name a White House beat writer who is as obsessed with political tactics as Bill Clinton. Clinton, after all, is a president who approved every soft-money ad script for his 1996 campaign and encouraged Dick Morris to conduct a poll to help him decide whether he should stonewall or confess his sexual misdeeds.

But unlike the fabled good old days (The Carter years when the press became inflamed over killer rabbits? The Reagan era built around Mike Deaver's visuals?), the press now stands accused of twisting facts to fit pre-determined mindsets and yielding to the siren song of cleverness. Oh, the horror of it all. Are journalists really out to savage Clinton because they are ideologically outraged by his bland-is-better moderate agenda? Do they hate him for supporting abortion rights or courting the gay vote? Yes, there is palpable animus directed at the president. You know why? Because reporters—and this is a saving grace of the profession—hate being lied to. (Sorry, the proper White House word is "misled.") Forget Monica, if you can. Clinton is a man who claimed in the 1992 campaign not to recall receiving an Army induction notice. I can recall dozens of whoppers Clinton unashamedly told to cover up his 1996 campaign scandals. The president has spent years in public perfecting the semantic dance steps that he so memorably employed in his grand jury testimony.

I got so caught up in Clinton's veracity problems, I almost forgot that it is the press who are in the dock accused of the high crime of excessive cleverness. Now I'm not going to defend every cynical put-down that has made its way into print, especially the ones that aren't very funny. Nor am I going to deny that too many hours wearing TV makeup can give print reporters an exalted sense of their own wit and wisdom. But some of the wise-ass commentary that the *Monthly* decries is merely the adolescent way reporters rebel against a political culture in which they are manipulated and spun to death. Also, at a time when serious newspapers are fighting for circulation, some reader-friendly irreverence can be justified as a small compromise on behalf of a greater good.

The subtext for this symposium, I suspect, is frustration over a year of non-stop scandal-mongering in Washington. I will resist the too-clever temptation to claim that the press is being blamed for Clinton's sins. But I do think that the President is the indirect cause of the jarring one-note repetitiveness of recent Washington news. Long before the scandal hit, the Clinton administration was running out of energy and ideas. Granted, there are major stories not being adequately covered in the press, but the locus of most of this real news is outside the capital. Confronted with a Washington news vacuum, the press did what it always does—over-reacted to a story reeking of sex, cover-up and ersatz drama.

So as the *Monthly* gets ready to aim its mighty arsenal at a younger journalistic generation that does, at times, take self-expression a bit too far, I feel compelled to shout a slogan that was current around the time this magazine was born: "Don't shoot, they're your children!"*

WALTER SHAPIRO, *is a political columnist for* USA Today *and co-author of the "Chatterbox" column in* Slate.

SUZANNAH LESSARD:

The problem with the more subjective elements in journalism today, in my view, is not inventiveness per se but cynicism. During the '80s it became extremely unfashionable to believe in anything or anyone who had anything to do with political life. It was as if the slightest taint of hope or admiration, or of in any way taking seriously what transpired on the political stage, would automatically brand a journalist as credulous.

**For Charlie Peters' response to this item, see pp. 5-6.*

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And credulousness, in the atmosphere of those times, held the horror of terminal disease. This came about, perhaps, because the Reagan propaganda about America was so patently and dangerously delusory and yet pervasive that any positive note might automatically seem to join the Pollyanna chorus.

Whatever the reason, this legacy is destructive. One H. L. Mencken is probably enough for all time. Imitations are really a kind of comedy act that are more about the writer than they are reflections on current affairs. The value of inventiveness in journalism is that it brings to reflection the full spectrum of responsiveness and the variety of the ways in which we see things. Faith, hope, and charity are elemental ingredients in that mix.

But this is not to say that we must have writers who are positive about what is going on. The distinction has to do with a richness of tone. One can excoriate in a tone that implies that things could not be any other way, and one can excoriate in a way that admits, implicitly, the possibilities of what could be. It's the latter tone that is capable of grief, of authentic outrage, of compassion, all of which "betray" belief of a kind.

Idealism—one could call it an underlying tone of love, as opposed to scorn or contempt—is always risky and exposing. We see it still appearing calmly but courageously in the writings of older commentators who do not, on the whole, avail themselves of creative devices. Among the more inventive generations it's almost obsolete, and we are all impoverished for it. It can't be true that inventiveness necessarily leads in this direction: Great fiction is always work that arises out of love, however ghastly the events and characters depicted. The argument that the cynicism only reflects the debasement of the political world is arrant nonsense. It's a rule of thumb that where humanity is gathered in significant numbers the full Shakespearean panoply is present. ●

SUZANNAH LESSARD *is the author of* The Architect of Desire: Beauty and Danger in the Stanford White Family.

GREGG EASTERBROOK:

In a bid to curry favor with powerful insiders, Gregg Easterbrook today sent Charles Peters an article telling him what he wanted to hear about trends in contemporary journalism. Easterbrook spun the article as an honest effort, claiming in a brief telephone interview that his were "the best points I could think of." But sources close to the article, including a *Washington Monthly* staff editor who spoke on the condition that her name would melodramatically not be used in order to make her quote seem more exciting, said that Easterbrook and Peters had actually discussed the content of the article before it was written, and that "Charlie told Gregg to come up with something interesting." This was seen by well-informed but nameless observers as another instance of Washington journalism placing spin first and content second.

Sensing a hostile press corps at his appearance before the House Subcommittee on Bridge Abutments, Pancreas Research and Airport Reforestation, Easterbrook tried to depict himself as merely "an author" who was "trying to dream something up." He said that "generations of Easterbrooks have worked the soil of this great land, trying to dream something up." This appeal seemed carefully calculated to deflect questions about whether he and Peters had privately met before the story was published. Easterbrook refused to answer questions about his sexual life, asserting that "this has nothing to do with public policy matters." Subcommittee staffers winked at each other at this statement. Reporters interpreted the winks as proof that there was something not being said.

Pressed to defend his so-called "article," Easterbrook offered the subcommittee an example. His example came from the Dec. 2, 1998, *New York Times* front page. Headlined PENITENTS CALLED BY GOP SPEAK ON PERILS OF PERJURY, this article was an account of the previous day's testimony before the Clinton impeachment panel and was presented as a straight article, not a news analysis. The article began,

"WASHINGTON. The way the Judiciary Committee billboarded the day's hearing—'The Consequences of Perjury'—had the ring of the pulpit to it, much as the sermon topic 'The Wages of Sin' has generated countless spiritual revivals across American history. Revival was most definitely the Republicans' hope, with their attempt to impeach President Clinton still failing to win over the American public. But instead of fire and brimstone, the Republicans presented two penitent miscreants—two ordinary women who were convicted and seriously punished by the government for having lied under oath about their sex lives."

Attempting to adopt a jaunty tone he no doubt learned by studying tapes of Tom Hanks being interviewed by Tina Brown about nuclear disarmament, Easterbrook noted to the committee that rather than emphasize the seriousness of a presidential impeachment inquiry, articles like this only contributed to the cynical sense that it's all a big game no one really need care about. Further, he stated in an obvious effort to divert attention from the fact that his stylish new glasses were slipping down his nose, a nose that, as

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Pushkin once wrote, "slopes/toward a point it never makes," a nose that has never been subjected to rhinoplasty, unlike the nose of Paula Jones, whose graphic sexual claims we wish we could dwell on here, the article's emphasis on political spin makes little of the fact that two women were being "seriously punished" by the legal system merely for trying to keep private details of their sexual lives, which we wish we could dwell on here. Isn't the fact that two women have been jailed for trying to maintain privacy in their sexual lives something that journalists should be upset about, not treat as sport? Madonna and Morgan Freeman, contacted in Los Angeles, said that the lack of sufficient graphic sexual details to allow establishment news organizations to act like tabloids showed that Washington is a town in crisis.

In the text of his article for *The Washington Monthly*, which was posted on the Internet before it was written, and then never actually published, Easterbrook would have said that examples of high-tech overly spun modern journalism were scarcely confined to *The New York Times*, but could be found almost anywhere.

People once turned to intellectual publications such as *The New Republic* or *The Atlantic Monthly* (Easterbrook shamelessly named his own employers, in order to hype them for runaway newsstand sales that lead to obscene profits that can then be used for soft-money donations to manipulate the public, which of course is the sole goal of all government officials) in order to find an urbane diversion from the excessive straightness of newspapers and television. But now, Easterbrook said, newspapers and television are so glib and condescending that people are turning to intellectual publications in hopes of finding straightness. Obviously, he was driven by self-interest to say this.

Easterbrook would have made one other point, but was cut off when Dan Rather entered the hearing room and began interviewing Cindy Crawford about Frank Rich's column on Dennis Rodman's new negligee. The point Easterbrook would have made is that once, reporters were far too reticent about stating the less attractive reasons that politicians and government officials did things—to appease interest groups, or win campaign donations, or promote their own names. Today, in contrast, many journalists seem interested only in the less attractive reasons that leaders do things. Coverage downplays, condescends to or skips over entirely the useful aspects of political decisions—that government programs really can help people. By drumming on the shady side of politics and skipping over the admirable side, journalistic glibness fails to reward the country's leaders for that part of their actions which are admirable, thereby encouraging more cynicism to be reported on.

In a subsequent appearance before the House Subcommittee on Air Time and Quotable Non-Sequiturs, Easterbrook denied that he had received payments from Peters for his article, saying, "No one has ever received payments from Charlie Peters." IRS records uncovered by committee investigators contradicted this claim, showing that *The Washington Monthly* did in fact pay a writer for an article on March 22, 1974. A disgruntled former *Washington Monthly* business manager, who was fired for making the payment, provided the records to the subcommittee. Investigators hope to link *The Washington Monthly* to a series of payments to printers, office-supply distributors and take-out delicatessens. Clearly coached by high-powered media spinmeisters, Easterbrook denied all knowledge of the payments. ●

GREGG EASTERBROOK *is a senior editor of* The New Republic, *a contributing editor of* The Atlantic Monthly, *and author of* Beside Still Waters: Searching for Meaning in an Age of Doubt.

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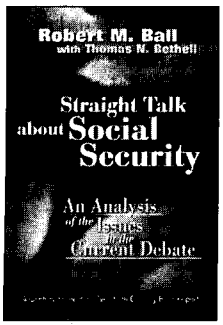

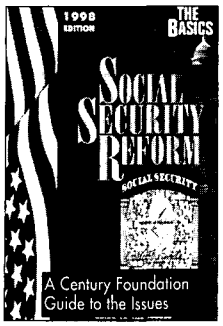

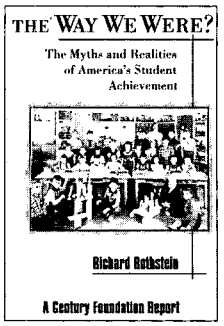

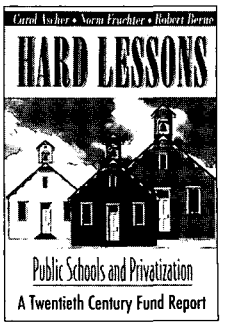

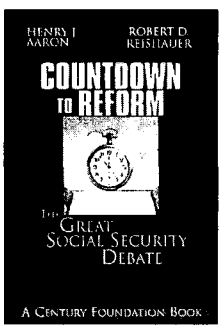

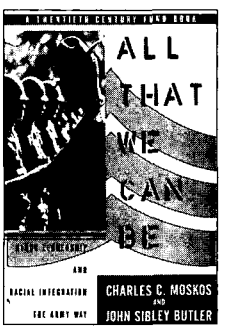

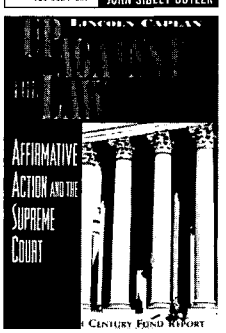

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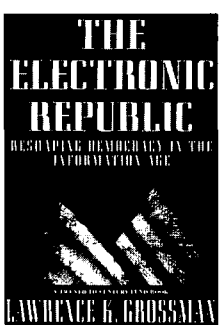

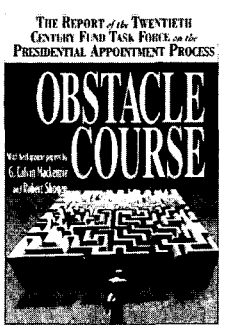

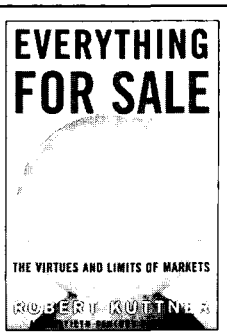

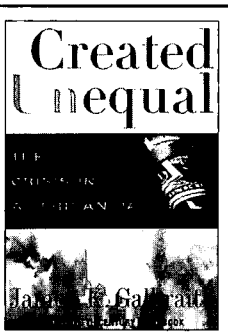

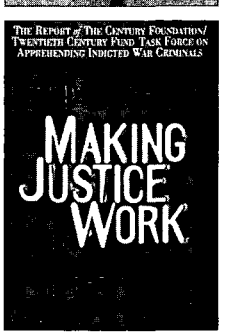

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The Outcast

Norman Podhoretz never forgave the New York intellectuals for rejecting him

By Nicholas Lemann

I HAD A DISTINCTLY MIDDLE-AGED MOMENT when I picked up the galley proof of Norman Podhoretz's *Ex-Friends*. The publisher's blurb on the inside cover says: "[T]his memoir of some of the key intellectual battles of the last 30 years offers a rare, firsthand portrait of the New York intellectuals—'American Bloomsbury' as they have been called—by one of the few surviving members." The phrase "American Bloomsbury" was coined, I believe, not by the etherous passive-voice-denoted entity of the blurb but by me, in the pages of this magazine, in a review of Alexander Bloom's *Prodigal Sons* published in 1986.

EX-FRIENDS
Falling Out With Allen Ginsberg, Lionel & Diana Trilling, Lillian Helman, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Mailer
By Norman Podhoretz
The Free Press, $25

What I meant was that the New York intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century—or, as Podhoretz calls them, using Murray Kempton's term, "the Family"—was our best example of a tight-knit, complicatedly connected hothouse group of writers and intellectuals whose ideas changed the culture. Since then the comparison has become even more apt: Both Bloomsbury and the Family have spawned a seemingly inexhaustible series of memoirs. The publisher's blurb makes it sound as if *Ex-Friends* will be one of the last Family memoirs because so few of the members are left. I don't think so. If Bloomsbury is any guide, the death of the original members only frees their children to get started on their memoirs. Surely out of the group that includes David Bell and John Podhoretz and Maura Moynihan and Lizzie Glazer and Bill Kristol will emerge our Nigel Nicolson and Quentin Bell.

As with Bloomsbury, the story of the Family has by now become so familiar and comfortable that reading in it is like slipping into a warm bath. Norman Podhoretz alone has now written at least three Family memoirs (four if you count *The Bloody Crossroads*) covering essentially the same ground. Here is the broad outline: The Family took form in the 1930s, mainly around the founding of *Partisan Review*. Most of its members were Jews from working-class backgrounds, and most were ex-Communists. They came together in shared commitment to anti-Stalinist Left politics, but they were really esthetes first and political people second. Indeed, their disillusionment with Communism was over not just the Moscow trials and Stalin's alliance with Hitler, but also over the Party's insistence that its members celebrate mediocre, didactic works of art and literature and condemn great ones that didn't hew to the party line.

Through the '40s and '50s, its glory days, the Family lived a rarefied, enclosed, incestuous life, publishing in such small-circulation journals as *Dissent*, *Commentary* and *The New Leader* in addition to *Partisan Review* and conducting a never-ending series of complicated feuds and love affairs. It had no use for and little interaction with the main cultural institutions—and yet it produced such enduring works as Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination*, and Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

The '60s brought the life of the Family to an end. Some became faculty fifth columnists in the student revolution, some (like Podhoretz) moved right and started the neoconservative movement, some retreated into comfortable professorships, some went mainstream and wrote bestsellers (Norman Mailer) or ran for office (Daniel Patrick Moynihan). Today there's nothing in America quite like the Family.

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With *Ex-Friends* Podhoretz has re-told the Family story in the odd and provocative form of five mesmerizing, densely interconnected narratives of his feuds with prominent people who were either Family members or figures on the periphery: Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Mailer. To present yourself as a feudist is to make it quite difficult to achieve what I would have thought would be every memoir-writer's dream, to come across as a deeply sympathetic character. Does Podhoretz, in what he describes as "my rather reclusive dotage," just not care what people think of him any more? No, probably not—if he didn't care, then he wouldn't have so carefully constructed each story so as to demonstrate that he was right and the ex-friend wrong. But the stories, though brilliantly incisive about the weaknesses of their subjects, present Podhoretz quite differently from the way he seems to think they do. At the very least they offer a massive temptation, which I won't resist, to armchair-psychoanalyze him.

Each of the ex-friendships began as an alliance that was more advantageous to Podhoretz than to the ex-friend. Allen Ginsberg, his Columbia classmate, was editor of the campus literary magazine and the first person to publish Podhoretz's writing; Lionel Trilling was the leading light of the Columbia faculty; Hellman operated a glamorous literary salon; Arendt was one of the world's great thinkers; and Mailer was New York's hottest young novelist. The narrative arc of each story is the same. First Podhoretz, powerfully eager and charming, wins the person over. A wonderful and well-recounted period of closeness follows (except in the case of Ginsberg, who was never really a friend). Even during this phase Podhoretz, though, as presented by Podhoretz, isn't a terribly appealing character. He expertly catalogues the weaknesses of the friend (without letting the friend know he's doing so) while reaping as much benefit as he can from the friendship. He isn't especially generous, loving, or steadfast; for example he tells Hellman he likes her books when he doesn't, which isn't an act of true friendship.

And then the friendship ends—over politics, as Podhoretz tells it, each of the ex-friends having proved to be more sympathetic to the New Left, less alarmed about the Soviet threat, and less loyal to the Jewish cause than he. Podhoretz's overarching explanation for all this feuding is that it is simply an example of "what life is always like for an intellectual," because "[s]uch a person takes ideas as seriously as an orthodox religious person takes … doctrine or dogma." In particular, when there has been a "seizure of enormous power by radical ideas and attitudes over the institutions controlled by intellectuals," as occurred in the '60s, feuding is practically a moral responsibility. But Podhoretz's writing is too vividly detailed, and too candid, to allow him to get away with his own theory. He provides us with mountains of evidence that unusual prickliness is a personality trait of his, not a characteristic that all members of the type to which he belongs possess in equal measure. In the course of going through his official roster of ex-friendships he also mentions that he has feuded with many other people, from Jackie Onassis to Nathan Glazer, and that as a young literary critic he was known for usually being on the attack. He has that illogical but quite common pairing of human qualities, hypercriticality and hypersensitivity. Read carefully in the ex-friendships, and you often find that what turned things sour was that the other person criticized Podhoretz in a way that he found mystifyingly unjustified and that deeply, permanently wounded him. There's more going on here than just intellectuals differing over politics.

The most hurtful event in Podhoretz's public life was the extremely negative reception that his first memoir, *Making It*, got when it was published in 1967, when he was still in his thirties. *Making It* has the same master narrative as *Ex-Friends*—it's the story of Podhoretz's rise from Brooklyn poverty into full Family membership—but it's packaged in the somewhat forced premise that ambition "seems to be replacing erotic lust as the prime dirty little secret of the well-educated American soul." *Making It* was a direct attack on the ethos of the Family, which claimed to hold itself proudly apart from the national preoccupation with worldly success, and the Family responded by disliking it. The Trillings advised him not to publish it (Diana correctly calling it "completely humorless"). Hannah Arendt didn't like it. Cruelest blow of all, Norman Mailer, who'd told Podhoretz he liked it, published a negative review of *Making It* in *Partisan Review*.

It's evident that Podhoretz had very high hopes for *Making It*—it would be his version of the kind of daring, candid, splashily successful confession that was making his friend Mailer famous and celebrated in those days. Why didn't it work? Alas, not just because the Family found Podhoretz's truths too uncomfortable. Self-presentation is a delicate art, and Podhoretz has never mastered it. He's so much inside his own head that he can't perform the basic move—essential to the work of actors, politicians, and memoirists—of accurately perceiving how audiences will respond to him. *Making It* is the functional equivalent of the scene in Trilling's class at Columbia, replayed in *Ex-Friends*, where Podhoretz's hand is always up and he can't understand why that annoys the teacher. This is a

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minor flaw of self-presentation and empathetic understanding—I don't mean to make too much of it. Podhoretz was, no doubt, the smartest and best-prepared student in the class; *Making It* is irresistibly interesting; and he did show courage in being willing to follow his passions where they took him. His tendency to attract mocking criticism is important only because he is the opposite of impervious; if he could have figured out how to avoid being mocked, or not to care when he was, there would have been no problem.

The critical failure of *Making It* brought to an end a phase in Podhoretz's life—the phase in which he was invited to the best and most glamorous parties in town, such as Truman Capote's 1965 masked ball at the Plaza Hotel. Overnight he became uncool, the kind of person who's made fun of behind his back. Was this treatment unfair, as Podhoretz has complained for years? Absolutely. He got a full dose of the New York literary-intellectual *souk* at its worst: the refusal to take good ideas seriously if they're not properly packaged, the reflexive liberalism, the disloyalty to someone who strays outside the charmed circle. His fate was especially cruel for being perfectly ironic: Because he wrote a book admitting to his deep attraction to the high life in New York, he was denied access to it.

It's true that the worst excesses of the student revolution and the black power movement occurred just after the publication of *Making It*, but the impression you get in *Ex-Friends* is that the painful failure of *Making It* also helped drive Podhoretz to the right. To explain how, I'll cite another item in Family history, Philip Rahv's 1938 essay "Paleface and Redskin." This was an update of the old Apollonian-Dionysian distinction, applied to American literature: Walt Whitman was a Redskin, Henry James was a Paleface.

These categories apply well to the young Podhoretz—better than the purely political categories that he uses to explain himself. His soul was a battleground between his Paleface and Redskin impulses, the Paleface determinedly conventional and bourgeois and "good," the Redskin filled with wild longings (which Podhoretz discusses with surprising candor in *Ex-Friends*) for sex and fame. This passage, from the chapter on Allen Ginsberg, says it all:

"As against the law-abiding life I had chosen of a steady job and marriage and children, he conjured up a world of complete freedom from the limits imposed by such grim responsibilities. It was a world that promised endless erotic possibility together with the excitements of an expanded consciousness constantly open to new dimensions of being: more adventure, more sex, more intensity, more *life*. God knows that as a young man full of energy and curiosity, and not altogether averse to taking risks, I was tempted by all this. God knows too that there were moments when I felt cheated and when I dreamed of breaking out of the limits I had imposed upon myself. Yet at the same time, I was repelled by Ginsburg's world."

During the '60s, and especially in writing *Making It*, Podhoretz ventured into Redskin territory: exciting, expressive, unconventional. He couldn't have been more badly burned. So he beat a permanent retreat into the Paleface realm, which, to him, was conservatism, with its toughness, its strict limits, its intense awareness of the perils of liberation. As a writer his subject changed from literature (Redskin), which he loved, to politics (Paleface), which he regarded as a grim duty. If you remove the psychological dimension, Podhoretz's version of his political migration from Cold War liberal to '60s radical to neoconservative, just doesn't scan. For example, in *Ex-Friends* he explains his move to the right partly by saying that in the late '60s or early '70s he learned that the Soviet Union was much more dangerous than he had assumed; previously, after Stalin had died, he had been a peaceful-coexistence man. But for this to be the whole story requires that what most people think of as the hottest moment of the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, failed to pierce the consciousness of Podhoretz, since by his own account he remained a quasi-radical for another five years. Obviously his political development was a blend of responses to events in the world and events in his own life.

The stated aim of *Making It* was to induce everyone to stop hypocritically denying the omnipresence of ambition in American life. If you take that at face value, then Norman Podhoretz ought to be delighted with the state of things today. Ambition is by no stretch of the imagination any longer a dirty little secret, including in the intellectual world. It's right out in the open. The leading writers and thinkers are the objects of bidding wars among universities, book publishers, and magazines. Podhoretzian engagement in politics has proliferated to the point where there is a whole economy employing "action intellectuals" in think tanks. A situation in which America's most important intellectuals care about nothing so much as what's in four magazines with a combined circulation of under 100,000 seems impossibly distant.

Is Podhoretz delighted with this turn of events? No, he isn't. He misses the old days, his literary-critic young manhood and the heyday of the Family. "I regret the loss of the literary-intellectual world in which I used to live," he says at the end of *Ex-Friends*. And: "We now have 'policy wonks' by the thousands,

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but we have only a handful of thinkers who are willing and able to examine and critically debate either the assumptions these legislatively oriented minds do not even realize they are making or the intellectual foundations on which they stand." And: "[W]hat made the Family special ... was the high concentration of writers and intellectuals who not only had superior minds ... but whose major passion in life was ideas and the arts, and who could get just as wrought up in an argument over the work of a novelist or painter as they could about political ideologies." These are poignant words because, as *Ex-Friends* makes clear, the things Podhoretz now realizes he loved about the Family are just what he personally rejected in the late '60s: the Family's apartness from the commercial mainstream (snobbish and hypocritical though it could sometimes be), its high piety about its mission, its aestheticism.

It would be too much to say that the whole tenor of American culture would be different today if Norman Podhoretz's career hadn't permuted in the way it did. But *Ex-Friends* left me with the feeling that at least one precious resource, Podhoretz's critical intelligence, was sacrificed on the altar of his own thin-skinnedness. ●

The Truth That Heals

How does a nation recover from crimes against humanity?

By Alexandra Starr

A FEW YEARS AGO, I WATCHED A DOCUMENtary on concentration camp survivors at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. Without exception, the stories were harrowing—one man had been forced to set fire to his relatives after an escape attempt, another had witnessed a young mother inadvertedly suffocate her baby as they hid from the Nazis. But while these men and women had been exposed to unimaginable torture, almost all them relayed their experiences in a composed manner. I found their apparent sanity almost as shocking as the ordeals they were describing. How, I wondered, could these people have come to terms with their past?

BETWEEN VENGEANCE AND FORGIVENESS: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence
by Martha Minow
Beacon Press, $23

In *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, Martha Minow explores the process of rebuilding lives and societies in the aftermath of atrocity. Minow, a professor at Harvard Law School, makes clear from the outset that any response to societal-level violence will be inadequate. "Even to grope for words to describe horrific events is to negate their unspeakable qualities," she writes. But silence is not an acceptable alternative: Victims will never forget what they have been through, and denying them retribution will only build hatred and resentment. The challenge, then, is to negotiate a path between securing justice for victims and attempting to rebuild a society. Minow does not endorse any one method of performing this balancing act—she maintains that different cultures and circumstances will dictate the most appropriate response. But she obviously favors the approach of truth commissions, particularly the South African model, where individuals who honestly tell of their role in politically motivated violence can trade their testimony for amnesty. And in this compassionate and well-reasoned book, Minow makes a compelling case for truth commissions over traditional judicial prosecutions.

As a practical matter, trials are not really geared to deal with mass violence. No criminal justice system could try every person involved in genocide and systematic rape in wartime—there are simply too many perpetrators. And prosecutions can be a blunt instrument for securing justice. Trials have to answer yes or no, guilt or innocence, all or nothing—and the degrees of culpability are often not so stark. Minow points to the example of Drazen Erdemovic, a Croat married to a Serb who joined the Bosnian Army out of financial need. After receiving a sentence of 10 years for his participation in the mass slaughter of Muslim civilians in Srebrenica, Erdemovic expressed remorse for his actions, offering this explanation:

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"Your Honor, I had to do this. If I had refused, I would have been killed together with the victims. When I refused, they told me: 'If you are sorry for them, stand up, line up with them and we will kill you too.' I am not sorry for myself but for my family, my wife and son who then had nine months, and I could not refuse because then they would have killed me."

The court, Minow surmises, "did not have a mechanism in hand for treating a guilty plea joined with an explanation."

Even when trials target those most deserving of punishment, there are limits to what they can accomplish. The purpose of prosecutions is to calibrate accountability and inflict punishment, not to promote forgiveness. To see rapists and murderers pay for their transgressions can give victims and their families a sense of personal vindication. But as Minow points out, "the focus on prosecution can entrench an adversarial thirst for revenge." Repairing nations ultimately requires promoting reconciliation, and prosecutions are more likely to deepen existing schisms than foster rapprochement.

In contrast, the very purpose of truth commissions is healing individuals and societies. A central task of commissions is to write a history of a nation's troubled past. The gamble is that confronting difficult truths about oppressive regimes will lay the foundation for a reconciled democracy. Generally, truth commissions conduct their investigations in secret and subsequently release mammoth reports detailing their findings. But the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) took a more ambitious approach to involve as many people as possible in the reconciliation process: They conducted the majority of their hearings in public. For two years, victims' stories dominated the country's newspapers and television programs, forcing citizens to confront apartheid's crimes. The TRC also created a Register of Reconciliation for people to write their reactions to the testimony, even if they were not victims or had no motive to seek amnesty. The reasoning is that even bystanders need to deal with their sense of guilt.

The primary focus of truth commissions, however, is on restoring dignity to victims. Minow makes a convincing case for the restorative power of speaking about trauma. Facing the past, rather than attempting to forget it, is an essential element of healing, she explains. And in part because repressive governments almost always inflict torture and abuses clandestinely, victims can be helped by having their stories publicly acknowledged. Minow relates the experience of an individual who was blinded by an apartheid-era police officer. When asked how he felt about testifying, the man replied, "I feel what has been making me sick all of the time is the fact that I couldn't tell my story. But now I—it feels like I got my sight back by coming here."

Aside from providing catharsis for victims, truth commissions promote forgiveness. When society posits reconciliation as a primary goal, it influences individual responses to mass violence. "When a democratic process selects a truth commission, people ... say to one another: Focus on the truth and tell it whole ... [r]edefine victims as the entire society and redefine justice as accountability," writes Minow. A woman whose son had been shot by security police in South Africa eloquently summarized the humanistic motive behind truth commissions. After she listened to a police officer confess in amnesty hearings, she commented, "This thing called 'reconciliation'—if I am understanding it correctly—if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed [my son], if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back—then I agree, then I support it all."

Of course, not everyone shares this magnanimous vision. The family of legendary apartheid fighter Steve Biko, for example, joined a lawsuit challenging the creation of the TRC. They argued that the amnesty provisions violated the right of victims and their families to seek redress for abuses inflicted by the apartheid regime. The South African Supreme Court rejected the claim. And in a bitter twist, when Biko's interrogators applied for amnesty, they simply stated that Biko had died of a brain hemorrhage, and refused to confess to their role in the killing. Is it fair to expect Biko's family to forego retribution in the face of partial truth, or even for a complete account of what happened?

The fact that truth commissions are generally born out of political necessity can give the impression that victims are being cheated of justice. One of the U.N. commissioners on the El Salvador truth commission explained to me that trials were not an option after that country's bloody civil war—the penal system was so corrupt there was no way it could impart justice. And in South Africa, the outgoing apartheid leaders made some form of amnesty a condition for the peaceful transfer to a democratic society.

Even if truth commissions suffer from a "second-best" stigma, Minow cogently argues they are often a better option than prosecutions to deal with mass atrocity. That's particularly true when guilt cannot be assigned to any one side. Truth commissions would not have been a suitable method of dealing

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with the legacy of the Holocaust: Culpability lay squarely with the Nazis and the victimized group was nearly wiped out in the genocide. But when the line between perpetrator and victim cannot be drawn so easily, truth commissions can be an appropriate way of coming to terms with the past. They acknowledge ambiguity, permiting bystanders to take responsibility for inaction and allowing perpetrators to lay the groundwork for reconciliation. And while it is a tall order to expect victims to abandon demands for retribution, it can be in their interest to do so. Hatred can be self-destructive, and a preoccupation with past atrocities can lead to additional cycles of violence. "Perhaps rather than seeking revenge," writes Minow, "people can come to desire to rebuild." Instead of focusing on the horrors of the past, she seems to urge, think of the legacy you will leave to the future.

Dusty Death

The mining industry still refuses to face the reality of black lung

By Robert Weissman

BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY SAYS THAT "criminal homicide constitutes manslaughter when it is committed recklessly." Criminal homicide constitutes murder when "it is committed recklessly under circumstances manifesting extreme indifference to the value of human life." Do either of these categories apply to the conduct of an industry which knows that it is causing fatal disease in its workers, covers up the harm, opposes remedial measures and then cheats on monitoring tests designed to assure its workers' safety?

BLACK LUNG:
Anatomy of a Public Health Disaster
By Alan Derickson
Cornell University Press, $29.95

COAL:
A Memoir and Critique
By Duane Lockard
University of Virginia Press, $29.95

Certainly Alan Derickson's *Black Lung: Anatomy of a Public Health Disaster* offers a searing indictment of the industry. In a richly detailed account of the worker, public, corporate and medical understanding of the diseases once grouped under the name "miners' asthma" but now called black lung, Derickson shows that the devastating effects of coal dust on miners' health have long been known, but long denied by coal operators, medical doctors—many company-influenced—and government regulators.

Derickson's book opens by recounting an 1881 presentation by H.A. Lemen, a professor of medicine at the University of Denver, to the Colorado State Medical Society. Discussing a coal-miner patient, Lemen reported not only on his "harassing cough" but that he spit up a pint of black liquid—of a "decidely inky appearance"—a day. "The sentence I am reading was written with this fluid," he said. Lemen was not a maverick. British medical researchers had linked coal mining and respiratory ailments a full half century earlier. By the beginning of the twentieth century, there was widespread recognition of "miners' asthma" among medical professionals in the United States, although there was no good epidemiological evidence available. And while there was substantial confusion over the etiology of miners' asthma, some doctors emphasized the need for ventilation as a preventive measure to address a disease for which there was no cure. "Even the coal operators grudgingly conceded that miners' asthma existed," Derickson reports.

But following the great 1902 strike, progress toward understanding the disease came to a halt, and the mining companies, company doctors, and even independent physicians increasingly denied the existence or at least importance of miners' asthma. Indeed, for a long period of time it was argued that exposure to mine dust may provide a protective coating for the lungs, which would guard against tuberculosis.

The turnabout was due in part to developments

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in the medical profession, such as the increasing reliance on x-rays, which often fail to reveal black lung, but especially to a newfound recalcitrance among mining companies. The industry exerted its political power in state after state to ensure that workers' compensation did not cover miners' asthma, except silicosis, a severe form of black lung visible in x-rays.

Government and industry acknowledgement of black lung came only in the late 1960s. The shift was spurred not by any scientific breakthroughs, but by miners' organizing efforts to influence the legal, medical and popular conception of what had long been a disease defined by politics. Responding to a handful of progressive doctors who validated their disease and forcefully articulated the case of coal dust causation of lung impairments, thousands of miners joined the West Virginia Black Lung Association. In early 1969, 40,000 miners went on strike, demanding that West Virginia recognize black lung as a compensable condition. The strike led directly to passage of West Virginian workers' compensation legislation covering all forms of black lung, and soon to passage of the Federal Coal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1969.

The Mine Safety and Health Act had numerous shortcomings, but it represented a giant leap forward for the miners. It established a federal compensation scheme; it required mines to transfer workers with early signs of black lung to less dusty jobs with no loss in pay; and it put in place a federal standard for coal dust exposure. That federal standard stipulated that three years after enactment, miners could not be exposed to more than two milligrams of dust per cubic meter of air, the standard still in effect. Finally, it seemed, the cruel black lung deaths of coal miners would fade into history, as exposure declined and new cases were prevented.

As dramatic and hard-fought as the miners' victory was, it proved much less effective at curbing coal company abuses than must have been expected. Coal companies routinely cheat on coal dust sampling tests designed to evidence mine compliance with federal standards, making it impossible to know how serious dust exposures are. Black lung remains commonplace in coal country, with nearly 1,500 black lung deaths registered in 1994.

In 1991, then-Secretary of Labor Lynn Martin announced that coal operators had demonstrated a virtual "addiction to cheating" on coal dust sampling tests, charging that more than one third of the underground mines in the United States had tampered with coal dust samples submitted to the Mine Safety Health Administration (MSHA). Following a guilty plea by the nation's largest coal company, Peabody Coal, the Labor Department found "abnormal white centers" (AWCs) in the mine dust sampling cassettes submitted by approximately 500 mine operators. The Department alleged that the AWCs were caused by companies vacuuming the cassettes before forwarding them to inspectors. The mine operators bitterly fought the charges, arguing that the AWCs could result from the cassettes being dropped or from rough handling. Without eyewitness evidence, a judge threw out most of the citations.

But the *Louisville Courier-Journal* has done the Labor Department one better. In a stunning series on black lung published in April 1998, the paper examined coal dust sampling records and found that, in fiscal year 1997, 80 percent of the nation's underground mines submitted air samples that were impossibly clean. Samples taken in working areas at these mines registered .1 milligram of dust—the level that would be expected on a city street and a level which MSHA head J. Davitt McAteer calls "unfathomable" and "statistically impossible." Nearly half of the mines cheated on at least one in seven of their sampling tests.

In an extraordinary piece of journalism, reporter

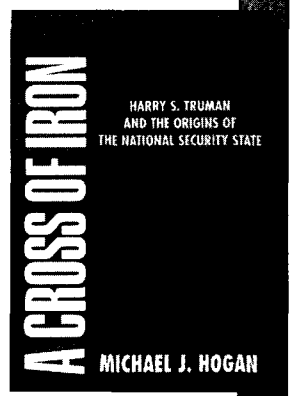
A Cross of Iron

Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State

Michael J. Hogan

"...the author succeeds brilliantly in demonstrating the impact of political culture on the formation of a new American State fundamentally different from that which existed before."

—Foreign Affairs



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Gardiner Harris supplemented the statistical analysis with interviews with foremen and workers who describe how the coal companies cheated on the dust sampling tests. "You just don't get bad samples and stay with these companies. They will fire your butt," explained one foreman. "They run them [dust tests] for 30 minutes and it's supposed to be eight hours," said a miner. And another foreman: "I was told by the superintendent or the owner to see to it that the dust pumps was turned off. ... I turned off the machines myself where I was a foreman."

There are, of course, other hazards of mining, as Duane Lockard recalls in *Coal*, an interesting meld of analysis and personal memoir from a Princeton University professor emeritus who comes from a coal family and spent some time in mines as a young man. Lockard's book provides a useful but rather general overview of mine explosions and other disasters, low pay, the successful fight of the Miners for Democracy to clean up the miners' union and other chapters in the story of the coal industry in twentieth century America. Where Lockard's book comes alive is with his personal recollections and quotations from the diary he kept as a young man. Through the eyes of a child in coal towns and of a young miner, Lockard conveys the life of a mining family—how they simultaneously depend on, and suffer at the hands of, the unaccountable corporations that dominate their community.

Life in coal country has certainly improved since Lockard's Depression-era childhood. Company towns are a thing of the past, pay is much higher, mine explosions are much rarer and workers have won significant pension rights. These gains are largely due to the efforts of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), nothwithstanding all of its faults during the 40-year autocratic reign of John Lewis and a decade of rule under a corrupt successor. The union is now a forceful advocate for health and safety, and union mines are much less likely to cheat on dust samples than non-union mines, according to the *Courier-Journal*'s analysis.

But even as the triumph of Miners for Democracy, a democratic insurgent movement, installed a more responsive union leadership, mechanization and a shift of the U.S. mining industry to the largely non-union West has drastically shrunk the size of the union and, consequently, diminished its bargaining strength and political influence. In the near term, at the very least, it does not appear that the miners' union will be able to function as a sufficient countervailing force to offset the mine owners' power.

How then to deal with the ongoing black lung issue, among the many problems still created by King Coal? MSHA head McAteer, a harsh industry critic before he assumed a place in government, says the federal government should take over dust monitoring responsibilities from the mines. But the UMWA says this move would be inadequate unless the number of federal inspectors was significantly increased. If the feds only test four times a year, the union says, the mine operators will be able to operate dirty on 361 days.

Until McAteer is able to finagle a large enough congressional appropriation, another approach might make sense: cracking down on fraud. After the Bush administration lodged the 1991 high-profile charges of dust-sample tampering, fraud dropped, according to the *Louisville Courier-Journal*'s analysis.

McAteer is disinclined to pursue this approach. "I'm not so much concerned about the criminal stuff," he told the Louisville paper. The "criminal stuff," however, is exactly what needs attention. And the seeming technicality of dust-sample tampering needs to be placed in an appropriate context. When violations of the law cause thousands of people to continue to suffer wrenching illness and die from foreseeable and preventable causes, why aren't criminal homicide prosecutions in order?

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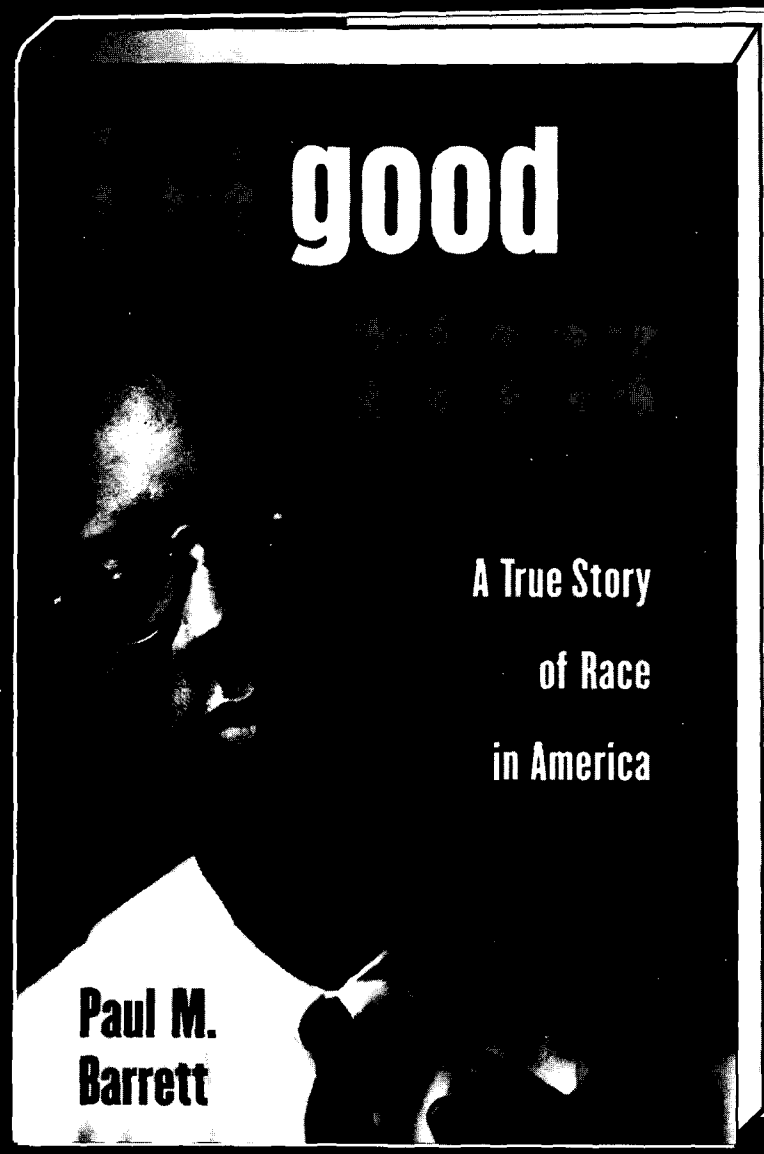

PAUL M. BARRETT is a former *Washington Monthly* editor and has covered legal affairs for twelve years at the *Wall Street Journal*, which nominated him for the 1997 Pulitzer Prize for beat reporting. He holds a law degree from Harvard.

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Political Booknotes

Dangerous Games

by Mark Wiedman

FOR THE PAST 25 YEARS, gambling has grown like kudzu across America. State legislatures started tapping the easy cash flows from lotteries in the late 1960s. Atlantic City broke the Vegas casino monopoly in 1976. And the '90s have seen the endless march of Indian tribal casinos, video poker kiosks, and riverboats. Americans now bet more than $650 billion a year. The industry's take from this amounts to $250 for every American, or $750 a head for the third of us who participate every year.

BAD BET:
The Inside Story of America's Gambling Industry
by Timothy L. O'Brien
Times Business/Random House, $25

Gambling's presence in American life is nothing new. In 1850, for instance, New York City boasted a gambling hall for every 85 residents. Nor is it particularly novel that state legislatures have grown addicted to lottery finance. In 1832, the revenues from lotteries run by eight eastern states dwarfed the federal budget by a factor of four.

What marks gambling's break with the past is professional mass marketing. As Timothy L. O'Brien writes in *Bad Bet*, "this once largely informal activity is being institutionalized and marketed with the same vigor and innocence as breakfast cereal." Only thirty years ago, gambling bosses truly were men like Bugsy Siegel, building tacky if not vigorously American Las Vegas knock-offs of the ritzy European clubs. They ran their clubs like the amateurs (and often crooks) that they were, typically not even bothering to do basic bookkeeping—a helpful habit if you're evading the IRS and bilking witless outside investors like Howard Hughes.

That all changed in the mid-1970s. A new set of entrepreneurs took over a couple of Vegas casinos and revolutionized their industry. Their formula was simple: take the dazzle of a Caesar's, but go for volume. And run the place like a business.

The pathbreakers were Bill Bennett and Bill Pennington, who took over the formerly Mob-owned casino Circus Circus in 1974. Their target was a customer new to Las Vegas—one who shopped at Sears. The pair pulled the burlesque shows and paved over 51 acres for RV parking. Older games intimidated novices, so out went the baccarat tables, and in went rows and rows of slot machines. What is now familiar was then unprecedented; and Circus Circus had struck a gusher. Southern California emptied itself heading for Circus Circus, with the kids in tow to see the carnival acts Circus Circus sponsored.

The magic lay not in going low-market, but in spotting a group of potential customers, defining what they wanted, and selling it. The modern doyen of casinos, Steve Wynn, built his empire with the same marketing savvy. In the '70s, he made the Golden Nugget the place to be for elegant gamblers. Then, in the '80s, he built the first major casino to go up in 15 years, the Mirage, and did it with all the marketing precision of Toyota or Procter & Gamble. With the Mirage, Wynn aimed to attract the vacationer for whom gambling alone would not be enough. So Wynn added what a crypto-gambler would want: restaurants, a shopping arcade, and a spa—and a dolphin tank, a shark tank, and a 40-foot volcano. And this autumn, Wynn has done it again, capturing headlines worldwide for his $2 billion Bellagio. Wynn's new target is the super-rich. For the allure at Bellagio is for the set just in from Rome—a Prada store, an opera house, and a top-notch $300 million collection of masterpieces, including Van Gogh, Cezanne, and Picasso.

Other marketing geniuses have followed. As the stigma of owning a casino dissipated, ITT and Hilton both bought in. Even Holiday Inn bought the casino firm Harrah's, and then built a nationwide casino chain with the same middle-market values of their hotels—good service, clean rooms, and moderate prices. The result of all this marketing and investment? A 40-fold growth in American betting since 1976.

So the story of modern gambling is of a supply-driven revolution. The ultimate impetus behind it, however, has not been entrepreneurs. It has been state aid. The nationwide spread of gambling required first that state legislators outside Nevada decriminalize casinos and gambling machines. Gambling money has bought much of that help—growing seven times from 1992 to 1998, to $85 million spent in the 1998 election alone. (That's on the same order of magnitude as what President Clinton spent in the 1996 election.) Even much of the putatively strait-laced Republican right has filed up for cash—including Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, who takes a plane ride with Steve Wynn occasionally, and his money by the thousands.

Now every state but Hawaii and Utah has legalized gambling in some form. This November, pro-gambling candidates and referenda won further advances nationwide. In South Carolina, video poker money hired every free bus and truck in the state just before the election to hound their opponent Governor David Beasley out of office. They succeeded, as did their friends in Alabama's gubernatorial race. And in California, voters approved Prop 5 and authorized unlimited expansion of "gaming" for Indian tribes.

But the states have not only deregulated the marketplace. They have become mass marketers par excellence. Thirty-seven states now hold lotteries. They advertise them with glee and in ways that would make a tobacco merchant blush. Banning other competition, state lotteries are far more profitable than casinos. While a casino may keep a 10 percent cut on the average bet, a lottery will retain a third to a

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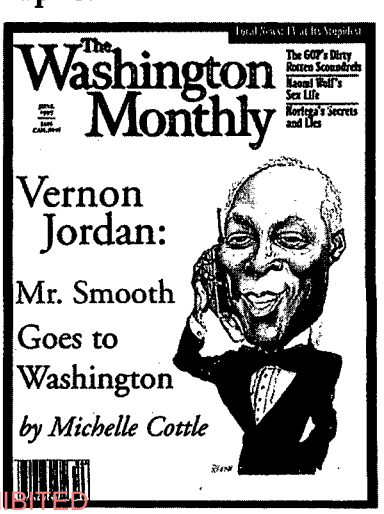

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half. This adds up to a lot of money: the average resident of Massachusetts—not average gambler—spent $505 on the lottery in 1996. Unsurprisingly, state legislators love the painless finance. Where else will they find a pseudo-tax where citizens stand in line to pay for an average of 3 percent of a state's budget?

The players don't complain, only gambling's foes. Gambling awakens misgivings in such strange bedfellows as Ralph Nader, William Safire, and Gary Bauer. For like drinking and doing drugs, gambling is a vice that most gamblers do for fun and in controlled amounts, but some do because they can't help themselves. The humanitarian cannot help loathing an industry that makes it so easy, so accessible, for compulsive gamblers—somewhere between 1 percent and 3 percent of all of us—to bankrupt themselves. For the social democrat, the lottery offends as a method of funding the public fisc. The poor pay far more than their share, certainly relative to their income, maybe absolutely. Lotteries' sleazy advertising upsets even the libertarian. Even if the state shouldn't forbid a free people from gambling, the state shouldn't mislead and goad its citizens into tossing their money away on lousy odds. And the state should not promote and profit from a business that snaps the link between hard work and reward, nor make sport of people who believe in that link, as lottery ads often do.

Mr. O'Brien's book is chock-full of tidbits about gambling, such as a shorthand guide to cheating at cards on antebellum riverboats. Yet while Mr. O'Brien reveals his anti-gambling animus through numerous scattered asides, he never lives up to the promise of his title: a sustained, articulated critique that might persuade anyone who doesn't agree with him from the start. The organization of the book, too, is jarring, flitting from topic to topic on a given page. For the patient reader, the book could serve as a trove of lore about modern American gambling. As a contribution to the nation's debate over gambling, however, it leaves the reader wanting more.

MARK WIEDMAN *is a management consultant in New York City.*

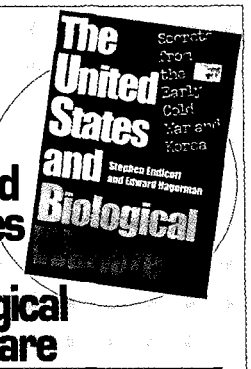
Iron Lady

by Wayne Biddle

POSSIBLY THE ONLY THING ONE needs to know about Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright is that she was Zbigniew Brzezinski's favorite grad student. But *Time* magazine correspondent Ann Blackman provides far more in this detailed biography. There is much about Czechoslovakia before, during, and after World War II; foreign policy luminaries of the Democratic Party; the ever-evolving roles of Washington society wives (and ex wives); the never-ending question of authentic Jewish identity; and other morasses that Albright somehow navigated on her way to the top.

Though she now embodies the lead role in a popular immigrant success story—the war-torn refugee "who works harder than the rest of us," as Blackman writes—it would be a major insult to the huddled masses of history ever to cast Madeleine Albright as disadvantaged. Before the war, her father, Josef Korbel, was an ambitious Czechoslovak diplomat ensconced in the privileged circles of Prague and Belgrade. In 1939 he left with his wife and two-year-old "Madlenka" for England, where he helped organize his government-in-exile's information service in London. During the Battle of Britain, they moved first to a 16th century farmhouse owned by his brother and then to a new four-bedroom home where "a very pleasant life" ensued. Immediately after the war the family returned to "a large, five-room apartment with a big fireplace and separate maid's quarters" in Prague. In 1946, Korbel was named the first Czechoslovak ambassador to Yugoslavia.

Though he served the Czech Communist government for ten months after it came to power in 1948, Korbel defected near the end of that year and moved to the United States. His wife and three children—Madeleine now had a brother and sister—sailed first-class to New York with 21 pieces of luggage and a Yugoslavian maid. They settled in affluent Great Neck on Long Island



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before moving to Colorado, where Korbel became a professor of international relations at the University of Denver. Here began the swift Americanization of Madeleine Korbel, who attended the elite Kent School for Girls and entered Wellesley College in 1955. She graduated with honors and, far more significantly, a diamond engagement ring from millionaire press scion Joseph Medill Paterson Albright.

Whether from their palatial estate on Oyster Bay, Long Island, where Joe's family published *Newsday*, or their three-story red brick home in Georgetown, the Albrights were bright young lights on the 1960s and '70s social circuit of well-heeled Democrats. She found time to earn a Ph.D in political science from Columbia, writing a dissertation about the role of the press during Czechoslovakia's 1968 "Prague Spring." White House lawyer and party sage Harry McPherson noticed Madeleine's fund-raising abilities when she served on the board of the Beauvoir School in Washington, thus introducing her to Senator and 1972 presidential candidate Edmund Muskie. From Muskie's Capitol Hill office she segued onto Jimmy Carter's National Security Council staff under Brzezinski, her former professor. Money aside, here was a tough lady, able to put her hustle and social clout to maximum advantage in a world dominated by stiff suits.

In 1982, Joe Albright told her he was in love with another woman and wanted a divorce. She took the split bitterly, according to Blackman, though it made her "many times a millionaire." Proceeding to use Joe's former money and the social contacts available to her, she practiced what might be called the Pamela style of political salon networking, which culminated in becoming a foreign policy adviser to Michael Dukakis during the 1988 presidential campaign. In 1989, she ushered Bill Clinton to membership in the Council on Foreign Relations. "He did not forget who helped put him there," Blackman writes with some understatement.

SEASONS OF HER LIFE:
A Biography of Madeleine Korbel Albright
by Ann Blackman
Scribner, $27

As Secretary of State, Albright has presided over diplomatic successes in Bosnia and the Middle East, but *Seasons of Her Life* is not about her approach to foreign policy. Blackman mentions that Albright is "comfortable projecting American force," that her interventionist views on Bosnia "had been formed by the dissolution of her native Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938," but purposely makes no attempt to assess her official impact. One anecdote is almost enough, anyway: "What's the point of having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?" Albright asked Colin Powell at an NSC meeting. "I thought I would have an aneurysm," the general later recalled.

By contrast, the curious subject of Albright's Jewish identity is featured in a chapter ominously titled "The Bombshell" and touched upon whenever possible from beginning to end, probably because it remains the biggest personal news story of her tenure as Secretary. The upshot? From all the evidence that Blackman methodically assembles, it seems that the influence of religious or ethnic Judaism on Madeleine Albright until 1997, when a *Washington Post* reporter revealed the tragedy of her grandparents' death in the Holocaust, was zero. Her parents, who raised her as a Roman Catholic, "took no part in any aspect of Jewish life, whether it was religious, educational, or cultural," Blackman writes. "Religion did not appear to figure strongly" even for the grandparents, who were "fully assimilated into Czechloslovak society" and celebrated the Christian holidays. It was thus Hitler's racist concept of "Jewish blood" that doomed the elder Korbels and countless other European nationals whose background had long evaporated from everyday life by the time he cast his maniacal net.

Albright was not allowed to come to terms with these matters privately, of course. As Blackman relates, she was subjected to the humiliating jokes of Washington wags, the "high dudgeon" of press pundits, and a grandly staged tour of Prague's Old Jewish Quarter, which presumably her family had not before frequented. "I went from being sad to sick to mad," she told the author about this harsh exposure and all the second-guessing of her parents' motives in not informing her about the circumstances of her grandparents' demise. Is Madeleine Albright Jewish? If you think it matters, you decide.

"What a wee little part of a person's life are his acts and words," Samuel Clemens once quipped about the art of biography. "His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself." Blackman never gets inside Albright's head, which must be an interesting place. (The Secretary of State's "greatest appeal is that she is just like us, only wealthier," she writes with a straight face.) Instead, the reader is situated only in the biographer's intellect, which in this case is mediated by a combination of Cold War rhetoric, bourgeois feminism, and pop psychology that *Time* has marketed

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for many years. To Blackman's credit, there is a great deal of leg work here, yet the effort amounts to a celebratory portrait of its subject, not a critical look.

WAYNE BIDDLE *is a writer in Washington, D.C.*

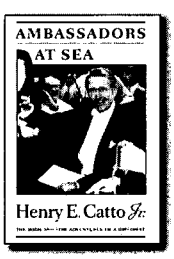
New Worlds

by Suzannah Lessard

ROBERT KAPLAN IS A VIGOROUS reporter who thinks on his feet, often invoking historical perspective, but never staying still, always voraciously searching for the outlines of the future in his restless travelogues, as he calls his works. They are really much more than that, but the form gives him room for wide-ranging references, for a certain casual associativeness, combined with the satisfaction of always moving on to something new. This is not to suggest that we have a lighthearted author here. An article that he wrote some years ago for *The Atlantic Monthly*, "The Culture of Anarchy", a terrifying description of the disintegration of culture and political order in Africa and Asia is said to have been a cult item among ambitious young neoconservatives in government in Washington, with issues handed around until they fell apart. Kaplan himself is in his late thirties, possibly beyond the reach of the adjective "young," and far too concerned for the fate of the weak and unlucky than is compatible with neoconservativism. But the popularity of his article, which could nestle nicely into the Book of the Apocalypse, was an eye opener as to the world view of upcoming generations. In the book that arose out of the article, *The Ends of the Earth; A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, he expanded his picture of impoverished, deracinated populations shifting about without hope in a degraded environment. A premise of that book was that our conventional maps, with their neat national boundaries and capital cities in bold lettering, are useless as descriptions of a world that more and more is reverting to ethnic alliances that are bounded by geographical features. This quest to see through false maps to actuality—to the configuration of the future—makes *The Ends of the Earth* an exciting book, however gloomy.

AN EMPIRE WILDERNESS:
Travels into America's Future
by Robert D. Kaplan
Random House, $27.50

An Empire Wilderness brings this same energy and commitment to America, and here, I have to say, I felt myself to be in a better position to judge what I was reading. I was struck first of all by the fact that though the material was drastically less alarming, the tone of pessimism was almost identical to that in *The Ends of the Earth*. Kaplan knows that to take on this new subject is to reveal himself. "To write about one's country is the most problematic form of autobiography," he writes in the introduction,



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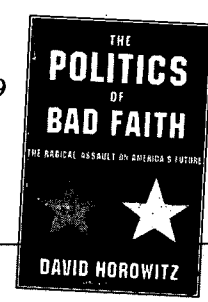

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and, indeed, we learn in this book that this author sees the world through a certain lens. After reading *An Empire Wilderness* one has a much clearer understanding of the author's limitations, in particular a tendency to gravitate toward a scary edge of despair, to find that in his material whatever it might be. But this is not to discredit the work in progress that is Kaplan breaking through old formulations in order to see the world as it is.

Kaplan follows his old method in this book, looking past the standard map of the country to what is actually there and what the future is likely to be—namely the probable dissolution of our national boundaries as Canada breaks up and natural alliances across both Northern and Southern borders begin to take precedence. As for the division into states, he sees that as already outdated: our country now falls naturally into post-urban sprawls defined by drainage basins. Especially in the West, which is the focus of this book—because he thinks that is where we can see our future most clearly—Kaplan sees the federal government's domain shrinking to power over the vast federally owned lands but becoming less and less relevant in the centers of population. His journey takes us through suburban "pods" of prosperity that are insulated from the world around them. The growing gap between the prosperous and the deprived is a recurring theme in his book as he takes us back and forth between worlds, filling out the picture with particulars of place. My only complaint is that there is a scarcity of encounters with people in the prosperous pods, so that they become, in the course of the book, an impersonal force of complacency. We get into the trailer park, but less into the mansionette—so little that we have a far less visceral sense of this predominant reality.

But to quibble with a writer like this is really to miss the point. A work like this is not about perfection: it cannot be. Kaplan throws himself into the world as into a torrent, and then swims for his life trying to understand it.

SUZANNAH LESSARD *is the author of* The Architect of Desire *and a contributing editor for* The Washington Monthly.

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Tidbits & Outrages

He's Joining the Clinton Legal Defense Team

A man convicted of drunk driving explained to the judge: "I enjoyed drinking while driving. It's one of the most pleasurable habits I've had."

"I Love You, You Love Me"

A man dressed in a "Barney" costume was sighted drinking in bars in Florida, muttering about how he plans to "fix those little shits for good."

Gotta Draw the Line Somewhere

A murderer in California told a police officer that he did not deserve the death penalty (which could be given if the murder occurred in conjunction with other felonies): "I might have killed that lady, but I'm no burglar."

Then the Devil Made Her File for Chapter 11

A manager of a thrift shop in British Colombia gave away all merchandise without charge because, she said, an angel told her to do it.

And Don't Forget About the Steering Wheel

A new AAA safe-driving video for seniors contains tips such as "Make an effort to look up at the road ahead."

Lucky He Didn't See "Godzilla"

A man said he robbed a store because he was taken over by characters from the movies "Pulp Fiction," "Reservoir Dogs" and "GoodFellas."

[illegible] in Tennessee [illegible] ordinance prohibiting [illegible] of an "adult [illegible] from engaging in sex [illegible] ses, but left out the [illegible] premises."

He Had Just Moved From Washington D.C.

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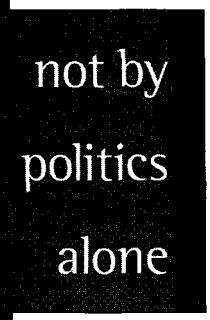

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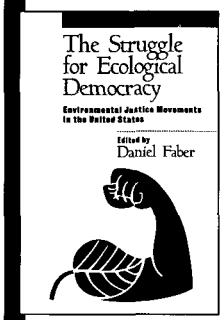

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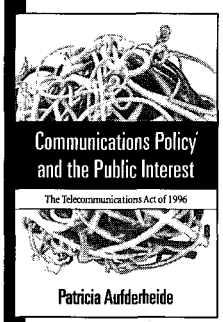

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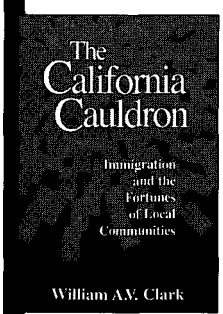

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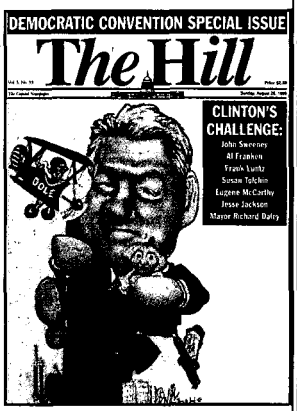

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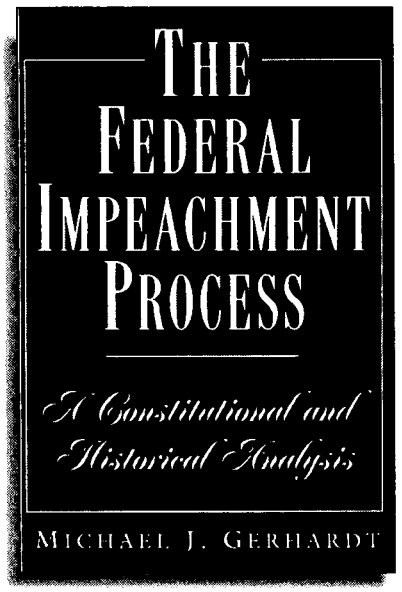

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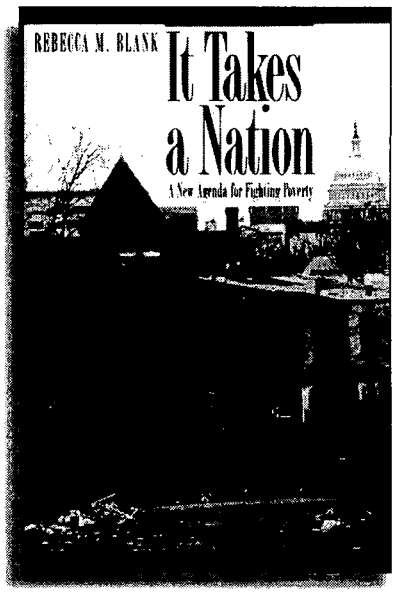

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